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"My father took me to see Swan Lake when I was a kid, but I was too young to remember anything." **Page 9**



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Party Conference Vows to Further Improve Market Economy

The Third Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which opened in Beijing last Saturday, closed on Tuesday.

President Hu Jintao delivered an important speech at the meeting, which was presided over by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. Hu is also general secretary of the Committee.

The plenum deliberated and approved two documents – a decision on issues regarding

the improvement of the socialist market economic system and a proposal on revising part of the country's constitution.

Tasks defined in a communique passed at the plenum include improving the basic economic system of keeping public ownership as the mainstay of the economy and allowing diverse forms of ownership to develop side by side; narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas; promoting coordinated development of different regions; establishing a unified,

open and orderly modern market system; improving employment, income distribution and social security systems; and establishing a mechanism to promote sustainable social and economic development.

The communique called for promoting and guiding the private sector of the economy and granting private enterprises the same treatment in investment, financing, taxation, land use and foreign trade.

"Non-public capital should be allowed to enter infrastruc-

ture, public utilities and other sectors not prohibited by laws and regulations," it states.

The communique calls for establishing a modern property rights system with explicitly defined ownership structure rights and liabilities, strict protection and smooth transfer channels.

The session also called for protecting the rights of farmers on land contract and management.

Under the principles of protecting farmers' rights and inter-

ests and controlling the amount of land turned to other uses by the government, China will reform its land-use system and improve procedures on land use.

The state will exert greater efforts to support and protect agriculture, deepen rural tax reform, and substantially reduce the financial burden on farmers.

The session called for accelerating the building of a unified national market, opening up the market domestically and internationally, developing a market for capital and other production

means, and promoting free circulation and full competition of production means.

It also called for strengthening public awareness of the personal credit system, and building a personal credit system with morality as its support, property rights as its basis, and law as its guarantee.

The meeting held that the issue of expanding employment be put higher on the agenda of the government, along with the pursuit of a proactive employment policy. (Sources: Xinhua)

China Declares Manned Space Mission a Success

China announced the success of its first manned spaceflight and the safe return of astronaut Yang Liwei Thursday morning.

The Shenzhou V, atop a Long March II F rocket carrying the 38-year old lieutenant colonel lifted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in the north west province of Gansu at 9 am Wednesday. Yang spent 21 hours in space, orbiting the earth 14 times, traveling more than 600,000 kilometers, as the 241st human being to go into space.

Shenzhou V returned to earth at the designated landing area in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 6:23 am (Beijing time), and shortly after emerging from the cabin, China's first astronaut was confirmed to be in good health.

"I have seen many landing scenes (on video) before, and I think this one was one of the most successful," said Yang, on his way back to Beijing aboard a special plane.

During Shenzhou V's seventh orbit of the Earth, Yang Liwei held up the flags of the People's Republic of China and the United Nations, symbolizing China's commitment to the peaceful exploration and exploitation of space.

President Hu Jintao was at the mission-control center of Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center to watch the launch of China's first manned spacecraft first hand.

The successful launch of Shenzhou V is "the glory of our great motherland and a mark for the initial victory of the country's first manned space flight and for the significant, historic step of the Chinese people in climbing the peak of the world's science and technology", said Hu following the launch.

Premier Wen Jiabao, on behalf of the central leadership, said in a congratulatory message Thursday morning that China's successful first manned spaceflight would be written into the history of China's space program development.

Jiang Zemin, chairman of the Central Military Commission, has hailed the success of China's first manned space flight as "one more proof of the will and capability of the

Chinese people to surmount the peak of world science and technology."

Yang Liwei, a former fighter pilot in the People's Liberation Army air force with a flight experience of 1,350 hours, is the first Chinese national to go into space.

Yang told his family in a phone call from the Shenzhou V that he felt "very good," and that the view from his spaceship was splendid, officials said Wednesday.

Prior to the conversation with his family, Yang talked with defense minister Cao Gangchuan, expressing his determination to complete his tasks well and ensure the full success of the mission.

The Chinese government had spent 18 billion yuan (about US \$2.2 billion) on its manned space program by the time the Shenzhou V returned to earth Thursday, according to a press release.

Zhang Qingwei, deputy chief commander of China's Manned Space Program said Thursday that following the success of this first manned space flight, China would launch lunar and deep space probe programs, as well as projects to build a space lab and space station.

Meanwhile Xie Mingbao, director of the China Manned Space Engineering Office, said in Beijing Thursday the Shenzhou VI would be launched in the next one or two years. (Sources: Xinhua)

Xinhua Photo

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China Greets World from Space

Yang Liwei, China's home-trained astronaut sent into orbit aboard a home-made spacecraft, said "hello" to the people of the world during his spaceship's seventh orbit around the earth at 6:40 pm Wednesday.

It was the first ever Chinese greeting from space, though the people of this country have been dreaming of such a step for thousands of years.

This dream, long kept alive only in fairy tales and legends, came true at 9 am Beijing time Wednesday, when the Shenzhou V, atop a Long March II F carrier rocket, blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center and

sent Yang into orbit in under 10 minutes.

"I feel good," said the 38-year-old Yang, a veteran fighter pilot in the People's Liberation Army Air Force, from his capsule.

During his flight, at around 5:30 pm Wednesday, Yang had a short conversation with Cao Gangchuan, defense minister and vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, via the live communications system. In the conversation, Yang expressed his determination to strive to complete his tasks well and ensure the full success of the mission.

Two and a half hours later, he told his wife and son in a

family chat, "it looks extremely splendid around here." He also told his son, "I have seen our beautiful home (the Earth) and recorded all I've seen here." His wife, Zhang Yumei, works at China Space City, on the outskirts of Beijing. Their son, Yang Ningkang, is eight years old.

Yang then showed a Chinese and a United Nations flag in his capsule. This move was intended to highlight China's persistent stand for and pursuit of the peaceful exploration and exploitation of space, according to sources with the Beijing Aerospace Command and Control Center. (Xinhua)



Yang Liwei has a short conversation with defense minister Cao Gangchuan.

Witnessing History

By Chen Ying / Le Qian

China's first manned space vehicle Shenzhou V spaceship was launched from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center 9 am Wednesday morning. Reporters witnessed the whole launch process at the Beijing Aerospace Command and Control Center.

At five o'clock Wednesday morning, center staff, wearing blue, static-proof clothing, were busy dealing with images and data from the monitors of several hundred computers at the center's command and control hall.

At 6:15 am, a clear image of Yang Liwei, China's first astronaut, appeared on a large screen on the left side of the hall, seated inside the spaceship. He went through a series of preparatory procedures and then belted himself to the seat with the safety harness.

Throughout the countdown, Yang smiled calmly at the monitor. At 9 am, the Long March II F rocket carrying the Shenzhou V lifted off, becoming a shrinking spot of light on the large monitor tracking its progress. Meanwhile, a small red spot could be seen moving across another large monitor showing a map of northwest China and the rocket's planned flight path.

Ten minutes later, the spaceship separated from the rocket and commenced orbiting the earth.

Twenty-two minutes after Shenzhou V entered its orbit, it unfolded its solar panels in response to an order from the Command and Control Center.

The order was radioed to the spacecraft's computer via the Yuanwang II, a marine relay vessel stationed in the South Pacific Ocean. During its 21-hour flight, the spacecraft received from the center ten digitized commands detailing instructions on its maneuvers in space.

At 9:34 am, Yang spoke his first words to the center from space - "I feel good." Everyone in the hall applauded immediately.

Eight minutes later, Li Jinai, the general director of the aerospace flight project, declared the launch of Shenzhou V a success.

After the commander informed Yang everything was OK in the spaceship, Yang released himself from the seat and began his work, which included writing a log. It took 90 minutes for the spaceship to complete one full circle of the earth. At 11:08 am, during the second revolution of the earth, Yang started his lunch.

At 3:54 pm, the spaceship's orbit-change program began operation, following Yang's advice to the center that everything was going smoothly in the module. Yang reported to the center three minutes later that the orbit-change program had been completed. This was confirmed by the center's monitor data.

Around 6:40 pm, during the seventh revolution, Yang displayed the Chinese and UN flag in the module and greeted the world from space.

At 7:58 pm, he called his family from space.

At around midnight, as the Shenzhou V was making its 11th circuit of the earth, Yang took his second rest.

The center sent a message at 5:35 am Thursday to Shenzhou V instructing it to commence its return to Earth. The re-entry module then separated from the propulsion module and it reduced its speed by firing its retro-rockets.

At 6:04 am, Shenzhou V re-entered the atmosphere. The re-entry capsule landed in central Inner Mongolia, north China, at 6:23 am Thursday after orbiting the earth 14 times.

At 6:36 am, the recovery team located the spaceship and confirmed that Yang Liwei was in good health after his 21 hours in space and a journey of more than 600,000 kilometers.

Li Jinai announced at 6:54 am that China's first manned space flight had been successful.



By Peng Xiaojiang

China's first astronaut, Yang Liwei, arrived back at Beijing Aerospace City at 11 am Thursday, after being picked up from the Shenzhou V landing site in Inner Mongolia.

Thousands of his fellow employees took part in the ceremony to welcome him. When his

car entered the complex, the noise of gongs and drums rose to a crescendo. The welcoming crowd waved flags and carried banners with slogans such as "Yang Liwei, you are the pride of Chinese people" and "Welcome home!"

Yang waved greetings to the well-wishers as the motorcade moved slowly through the crowd to the astronaut residential quarters.

Xinhua Photo

High-tech Supports China's First Manned Spacecraft

By Su Wei

With the blast-off of the Shenzhou V spacecraft atop a Long March II F rocket at 9 am Wednesday, China became the world's third nation to send a man into space, following the former Soviet Union and the United States.

Experts involved in the launch, which took place at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in the north western province of Gansu, spoke to Xinhua about the high-technology adopted for the mission.

The spaceflight monitoring and controlling network developed by China has reached advanced world levels, Yu Zhijian, chief designer of the system for monitoring manned space flight, told Xinhua Wednesday.

"Advanced in all technical indices and with a complete range of functions, the spaceflight monitoring and controlling network is capable of real-time transmission of voice, video and data that

allow face-to-face communications between the cosmonauts and ground controllers and the timely monitoring of the spaceship's operating systems," said Yu, who has been engaged in the design of spaceflight monitoring and controlling systems since 1999, when China launched its first Shenzhou spacecraft.

The monitoring and controlling system can also be connected to international networks, he said, making possible the sharing of international monitoring resources.

China has deployed 13 monitoring and controlling stations and ships around the world, allowing communication with the spacecraft during all the key stages of the mission. These include five measuring stations within China, four marine vessels, one mobile measuring station and three monitoring and controlling stations in other countries, including a new one in Malindi, Kenya.

Huang Chunping, com-

mander-in-chief of the rocket system of China's manned spaceflight program said that the Long March II F carrier rocket used to launch the manned Shenzhou V spacecraft has adopted 55 new technologies, including fault detection and handling, and escape systems. He said that the fault detection system would automatically detect and diagnose any fault in the initial stage of the flight and activate the escape system, which would, in turn, separate the spaceship from the rocket to ensure the safety of the astronaut.

Zhang Zhi, leading designer of the Long March II F rocket, explained that there are three avenues of escape for a cosmonaut aboard the Shenzhou V launched by Long March II F rocket, should an emergency occur.

These are low altitude escape, high altitude escape and rocket-spaceship emergency separation.

Inspired by Space Flight

By Zhao Hongyi

At 8 am Thursday, thousands of local residents, gathered in the square of the China Millennium Monument to celebrate the successful launch and return of the Shenzhou V.

Suizhong, the hometown of astronaut Yang Liwei, might be the place where excitement has reached the highest levels. The small county town close to Dalian has never seen such a concentration of reporters arriving from all over the country. Over 50,000 people gathered around the house of their hero, giving thanks to the family for their great contribution.

Yang's parents had gone to Beijing before Yang was launched into space. His elder sister and younger brother became the focus, telling stories of the astronaut's childhood. The county leadership also made full use of the great opportunity, recommending products from the tiny agricultural community.

Similar celebrations have occurred all over the country since the spacecraft was launched early Wednesday.

In Shanghai, hundreds of astronautical scientists and technicians gathered to watch the broadcast of Shenzhou V from early Wednesday morning. Standing throughout the night, the audience continued discussing the spaceflight even after its successfully completion 21 hours and 14 orbits of the earth later.

The chief executives of Hong Kong and Macao sent their congratulations to the motherland. Led by local media in the two special administration regions, a science and education fund titled the "Jiuquan Satellite Launching Fund" has been set up.

Crop seeds from Taiwan were carried aboard the spacecraft, and media on the island cheered for the success and cooperation.

In Xi'an, Lu Xiaodong, a doctoral candidate student at the Northwestern Polytechnical University's College of Astronautics, said he was proud of the country, and proud of himself as a participant in the country's astronautical industry.

In Beijing, Wang Yusheng, president of China Science and Technology Museum, said that the success confirms China has taken a worldwide leading position in the science and technologies of information, materials, power and automation. This great leap provides a bright new future for China's space technology advancement and commercialization.

Sahrina is a 17-year-old student living on the grassland in Inner Mongolia, near where the Shenzhou V landed Thursday morning. Sahrina said "I am very proud that the 'baby' landed in my home. This inspires me to study astronautical science and technology. Suddenly, I have found my future."

The 38-year-old People's Liberation Army astronaut has received high applause from Beijing. Thursday morning, defense minister Cao Gangchuan congratulated Yang on his successful mission. Meanwhile Yang has promised to "continue devoting my whole life to the astronautical science and technology of our motherland."



Fireworks light up the sky on October 15 in Suizhong, the hometown of astronaut Yang Liwei.

Photo by Gloom

“We Are Proud of You!”

By Peng Xiaojiang

After Shenzhou V, China's first manned spacecraft, was launched into outer space successfully, *Beijing Youth Daily* interviewed Yang's family about his extraordinary flight.

“I believe in my son's capabilities and our great country's scientific strength,” said Yang's mother at Beijing Aerospace Command and Control Center. Five years ago, when Yang Liwei told his family that he had been chosen to be trained as an astronaut, Yang's mother was deeply impressed. “You know, he finally seized the opportunity. I am very happy, and I know that my son is really excellent.”

After she was informed that her son would take this flight and go into space, she admitted that she couldn't help getting worried. But when Yang's mother saw that her son was so confident and composed

in the spacecraft, she felt much relieved. “Our family are all proud of him,” she said.

Beijing Youth Daily also went to Yang Liwei's hometown — Suizhong county, Liaoning province — and interviewed Yang Lijun, his elder sister and Yang Junwei, his younger brother.

“Our family felt very excited that he was one of the three astronauts. The nearer the launch time drew, the more nervous I felt, and I even couldn't fall asleep lately. When I got to know that my brother had set off and everything was going well, I could not help shedding tears. I take great pride in my dear brother,” said Yang Lijun.

“In my eyes, my brother is a fine example for me. He is now engaged in a glorious career. He has become a real astronaut — the first one in China,” said Yang's brother excitedly.



A mother's embrace for a national hero

Photo by Wei Tong

Going it Alone

By Wang Fang / Song Lifang

Anticipating the successful return of China's first astronaut, Yang Liwei, *Beijing Youth Daily* and *China Space News* interviewed Wang Yongzhi, the chief designer of China's manned spacecraft project.

Having devoted most of his youth to preparing for China's first manned spacecraft, he's been a busy man.

The preparations started back in 1993. As the leader of the appraisal team and the chief designer of the manned spacecraft project, Wang said the most arduous work was to lay down a set of overall plans which had to be advanced as well as practical, given China's limited experience in the area of astronautics.

When China's manned spacecraft project began, the equivalent projects in other countries had



Wang Yongzhi

already been running for more than 30 years. Wang and his colleagues agreed that China's project should draw on other countries' experience, while making progress in its own right.

Some foreign papers have criticized China's spacecraft as a copy of other countries' projects. In April 2001, Wang visited Russia and was invited to Moscow to attend the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the space trip made by the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin.

During the trip he was granted an honorary doctorate by his university, Moscow State Aviation Institute. At the presentation, he introduced the characteristics and technical features of the Chinese manned spacecraft. His Russian supervisor also stood up at the rostrum and offered his support. “China's spacecraft is not a Russian Soyuz,” he said. “It is wholly China's innovation”.

Wang has always emphasized that the best way to ensure safety with the spacecraft is to prepare as many stand-by schemes as possible. He believes the reliability of China's carrier rocket has reached and even exceeded that of the best rockets in the world. The next step is a space station. Wang already has plans for an 8-ton space laboratory for “long-term orbit”.

Foreign Comment

Herring Kyle, a NASA spokesman, commented on China's first launch of a manned spacecraft on Wednesday last week.

“The launch is an important event in the history of human space flight. We wish China success and hope that the astronaut will return safely. Obviously, the launch represents a new capability in the Chinese Space program. But the launch has no direct impact on NASA's program,” said Kyle.

— NASA

From aboard the International Space Station, American astronaut Edward Lu, whose parents were born in China, addressed these wishes to Yang: “Welcome to space” and “Have a safe journey.”

His colleague, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Malenchenko, told Mission Control in Houston: “I am glad to have somebody else in space instead of me and Ed. Also, I know it was great work by thousands and thousands of people from China.”

— Washington Post

Accolades poured in on Wednesday after China successfully ventured into orbit. In the United States, NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe described the launch as an important achievement. Japan added its praise, as did crew members set to blast off to the International Space Station who called China a serious contender in the race for supremacy in space.

— Reuters

The launch makes China the third country to put a human into space. The former Soviet Union sent Yuri Gagarin up in 1961; the United States launched Alan B. Shepard Jr. less than a month later. John Glenn became the first American in orbit in 1962.

In the United States, Pentagon spokeswoman Cheryl Irwin congratulated China. “We wish them success and for their astronaut's safe return,” she said.

— AP

“Welcome aboard!”

By Sun Ming

Richard F. Gordon Jr., 74, was one of the third group of astronauts named by NASA in October 1963. He made his first space flight as pilot on the three-day Gemini XI Mission, launched September 12th, 1966.

Gordon occupied the command module pilot seat on Apollo 12, November 14-24, 1969. Other crewmen on man's second lunar landing mission were Charles Conrad, spacecraft commander, and Alan L. Bean, lunar module pilot.

Throughout the 31 hour lunar surface stay by Conrad and Bean, Gordon remained in lunar orbit aboard the command module, “Yankee Clipper,” obtaining desired mapping photographs of tentative landing sites for future missions. He also performed the final redocking maneuvers following the successful lunar orbit rendezvous which was initiated by Conrad and Bean from within “Intrepid” after their ascent from the Moon's surface.

Beijing Today interviewed Gordon on the phone on Saturday

Beijing Today: China will launch its first manned spacecraft. What do you think about the launch?

Gordon: I congratulate China on their first launch of a manned spacecraft. As we say in the navy, “Welcome aboard!” Actually, I've heard of the news. Even though I left NASA over 20 years ago, I still care about space flights very much. It's really good news.

Beijing Today: Can you tell us your feeling when you were in space?

Gordon: Upon entering space a person experiences “zero G” (no gravity) over an extended period of time. It is a good feeling; there are no forces on the body and physically one does adapt to this environment over a short period of time. It is amazing to me that humans can adapt to so many different environments.

Beijing Today: What does the earth look like from the outer space? Can you describe your feeling when you first saw earth from the outer space?

Gordon: My first impression



Richard F. Gordon Jr.

when I got into orbit was that I was too close to Earth because everything was so close and so clear. It does look like one would expect it to appear from looking at a globe of the world. From the perspective of near-Earth-orbit it is a very beautiful and delicate sight.

Beijing Today: What's the biggest difficulty you encountered in space? Can you give Chinese astronauts some suggestions?

Gordon: The biggest difficulty I had in space was performing EVA (extra vehicular activity) without any restraint systems. I left the spacecraft for a planned 115-minute space walk, but I had to cut it short after 44 minutes because of difficulty maintaining my position in weightlessness without handholds or foot restraints, a valuable lesson for later space walkers. This problem was corrected for future flights and now it's not a problem.

My suggestion to Chinese astronauts on their maiden flight would be not to be too busy and save a little time to enjoy and reflect on your experiences.

Beijing Today: There is an American astronaut and a Russian astronaut in space currently. We want to imagine how they will say hello to our Chinese astronaut in space?

Gordon: They should be able to say hello, although the time will be short, but a Navy “Welcome Aboard” should be sufficient!

Telling it Like it is



Wang Ganjun

By Yu Shanshan

Wang Ganjun (Taylor G. Wang) Born in June 16, 1940, in China, Wang received a Bachelor of Science degree in physics in 1967, a Master of Science degree in physics in 1968, and a doctorate in physics in 1971, from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Wang flew on STS-51B Challenger (April 29 — May 6, 1985), as the principal Investigator on Spacelab 3, conducting investigations in drop dynamics leading to containerless material processing. At the conclusion of his mission, Dr. Wang had traveled over 2.9 million miles in 110 earth orbits, and had logged over 168 hours in space. Now he is a professor and Director of the Microgravity Science and Applications Center of Vanderbilt University.

Beijing Today interviewed Taylor Wang on the phone on October 2

Beijing Today: What do you think of this historic event for China and what would you like to say to the Chinese astronaut who has been chosen?

Wang: Firstly, it is a happy event for all Chinese people and I'd watch it on TV if I could. There are many reasons for a country and its government to spend huge sums sending astronauts into space, the principal one being that if other nations have this ability, you should have it too. Tell the astronaut to

appreciate this opportunity. It's a beautiful sight.

Beijing Today: What, in your eyes, was the situation of Chinese space flight in 1985 when you visited China after your space flight? Please comment on China's present level in astronautics.

Wang: I visited many facilities in 1985. I was impressed with their progress. However since they were cut off from outside collaboration, they had to develop everything in-house. I thought they had some catching up to do. As for now, I suspect their rocket science is close to par with everyone else. As for civilian space scientific research facilities, they are about 10 years behind.

Beijing Today: In preparing, did Chinese space specialists contact you and search for any information, suggestions or help?

Wang: Not much. As far as I know, there is some communication between Chinese and American space agencies, but it is bound by formalities, unlike that between the European and American space agencies. However, after the success of China's space flight, I guess there will be more chance for collaboration.

Beijing Today: Was your Drop Dynamics (DDM) instrument breakdown the biggest difficulty you met in the 1985 flight?

Wang: Yeah. You can imagine my panic. I had spent five years preparing for this one experiment. Not only that, I was the first person of Chinese descent to fly in the shuttle, and the Chinese community had taken a great deal of interest. You know the Chinese culture - you don't just represent yourself, you represent your family. The first thing you learn as a kid is to bring no shame to the family. So when I realized my experiment had failed, I could imagine my father telling me, “What's the matter with you? Can't you even do an experiment right?” Luckily, I finally fixed the problem and in fact, we are still using data from that flight more than 17 years later. So, I also want to tell the Chinese astronaut, don't lose face for your country.

China Reforms Export Tax Rebate System

China on Monday issued a new plan to reform the export tax rebate system so as to relieve the heavy burden on government coffers.

Since 1985, China has adopted tax rebates for exporting enterprises. The central government paid back a certain proportion of the consumption taxes and value added tax (VAT) to the enterprises after they paid taxes for exported goods. The tax rebates were allowed by rules of the World Trade Organization and widely adopted by many WTO members.

In recent years, however, with the rapid growth of China's exports, government revenues have failed to keep up with the tax rebates owed. This has affected the normal opera-

tions of export-oriented enterprises.

Some experts attribute the failure to the unreasonable export tax rebate mechanism, saying it fails to meet the needs of industrial restructuring and that the volume of the rebates has grown far beyond the capacity of central government finances.

"The more rapidly exports grow, the heavier the financial burden on the government finances becomes," Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said recently.

Under the reform plan, the export tax rebate mechanism will be continued, but the refund rate will be lowered. In terms of exports that China does not promote, such as crude oil, the government will reduce the tax

rebate rate by a large margin or even abolish refunds.

The new plan also guarantees that increases in central import duties will be used on export tax rebates. Local governments will shoulder some fiscal burdens with the central government in this regard, the plan stipulates.

The plan guarantees payments to export enterprises and payment of old debts with interest.

Many Chinese export enterprises have long complained about the large amount of tax rebate that is owed by the government. Some small enterprises even went out of business due to financial difficulties while waiting for the rebate.

Recently, foreign-funded enterprises

in China have also faced serious problems, which affect their international competitiveness and discourage further investment, said an official with the Ministry of Commerce.

After the reform, the rebate rate will be lowered, but the refund will be guaranteed and no new debt will be owed by the government, said the official. Heavy financial burdens on export enterprises will be eased and Chinese exports will be promoted, he said.

In 2002, China's central financial deficit reached 309.687 billion yuan (37.3 billion US dollars), while export tax rebates amounted to 115 billion yuan, 15 percent over the allocated budget.

(Xinhua)

Traffic a Little Upset on Sunday

By Wang Xiaoxiao

This weekend, the Sixth Beijing International Cultural Tourism Festival and 2003 Samsung Beijing International Marathon will be held in Beijing. As a result, parts of Ping'an and Chang'an avenues and other roads will be blocked off from traffic during certain parts of Sunday.

From 9:00 am to 11:30 am this Sunday, the centerpiece pageant of the International Cultural Tourism Festival will be held on Ping'an Avenue. So from 7:00 am until the show finishes, cars will not be able to travel between Xihuangchenggen Dajie and Di'anmen. From 8:50 until the activity finishes, vehicles

will also be blocked from the road between Di'anmen and Kuangjie.

At 8:31 on Sunday, the 2003 Samsung Beijing International Marathon will start in Tian'anmen Square and will finish at the National Olympic Sports Center. Thus a number of roads in between will be blocked off, including the east side road of the square, west Chang'an Avenue, the east side service road of west Erhuan Lu, the east side service road of west Sihuan Lu, the south side service road of north Sihuan Lu, the west side service road of Badaling Expressway and the north side service road of north Sihuan.

CSRC Issues Generous but Tough Policies

By Zhao Hongyi

Two regulations went into effect last week to help the fragile and sensitive stock market. One is to allow securities firms to issue bonds, and the other to involve new IPO issuers.

China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) has permitted securities firms to raise capital by issuing bonds, thus promoting the recovery of the depressed stock market.

Securities firms used only to be able to finance themselves by selling the state bonds they had been obliged to purchase, issuing shares, or by borrowing from other securities firms.

"They (securities firms) play a vital role in securing a healthy and prosperous stock market, but limited financing tools narrowed the long term growth prospects of the firms," said a spokesman for CSRC. "This will greatly increase their competitiveness and risk bearing capabilities."

Securities firms have wasted no time forwarding applications for bond issues since the new regulation went into effect on October 1. CITIC Securities, already publicly listed and one of the largest securities firms, said they had obtained approval from their board members and had sent an application to CSRC. "We'll issue public bonds under a ceiling of 2 billion yuan," the firm said in its quarterly operational report to share holders.

But another ceiling has been imposed by CSRC. Total bond issue should be no more than twice the net assets the firms had in its last fiscal year.

The ceiling is also applicable to new IPO issuers, according to the other regulation which went into effect from October 1.

The purpose, according to market observers, is to prevent unqualified share issuers from entering the market and better protect investors.

Regulation on AFC Released

By Zhang Zhan

October 3, the State Council approved a regulation allowing the emergence of a new kind of financial organization, auto financing companies (AFCs) which can offer auto loan services to Chinese consumers.

Sources from China Banking Regulatory Commission said that China's auto financing market should impose no restrictions on the capacity of the shareholders of AFCs, which means foreign AFCs will be treated equally with local ones.

The regulation sets out the qualifications of the AFCs, the

main condition being that the investor should be a legal corporate entity, incorporated either in or outside China. If the entity is a non-financial enterprise, it should have total assets for the previous year of no less than 4 billion yuan, and business revenue of no less than 2 billion yuan. If the entity is a non-bank financial institution, it should have a registered capital of no less than 300 million yuan. The investor should also have sound performance and have been profitable for the last three consecutive years.

Five Administrative Institutes Launched

By Hou Mingxin

Five new governmental institutions of Beijing Municipal Government opened on Wednesday. They are: the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), the Development and Reform Commission (DRC), the Commerce Bureau, the Industry Promotion Bureau and Population and Family Planning Commission.

The inauguration of the new institutions is part of the reform of the city's municipality administrative system which is scheduled to be completed by the end of the month.

SASAC's main responsibilities will include supervising and managing the state-owned assets of enterprises, as well as guiding and pushing forward the reform and restructuring of state-owned enterprises.

Address: 3 Lishilu Toutiao, Xicheng District Tel: 68017755

The main responsibilities of the DRC will include researching and framing economic and social development policies, promoting technol-

ogy and investment management for enterprises, economic reform. It will also cover all the responsibilities of the former Price Bureau.

Address: Ding 2 Fuxingmen Nandajie Tel: 66415588 Website: www.bjpc.gov.cn/index.jsp

The Commerce Bureau will take charge of national and foreign trade, and oversee the Beijing Grain Administrative and Beijing Port Office.

Address 1: 3 Taijichang Dajie, Dongcheng District Tel: 63088189, 63088159

Address 2: 190 Chaonei Dajie, Dongcheng District Tel: 65236688 Website: www.bjfec.gov.cn

The Industry Promotion Bureau will be responsible mainly for promoting the city's key industries.

Address: Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang District Tel: 85235626, 85235627 Website: www.bjec.gov.cn

Population and Family Planning Commission.

Address: 2 Huaibaishujie, Xuanwu District Tel: 63042212 Website: www.bjfc.gov.cn

City Sets Up Financial Development Counselor Group

By Wu Xueying

Beijing Financial Development Counselor Group was set up last Thursday. Chen Yanhong, director of Beijing Municipal Government Financial Office, announced it at the opening ceremony of the Fourth Beijing Chaoyang International Business Festival which kicked off on the same day.

The group is made up of 17 prominent experts and scholars including former China Security Regulatory Committee Chairman Liu Hongru, World Bank Group deputy president Zhang Shengman, Goldman Sachs Asia general manager Hu Zuli, Mer-

rill Lynch China chairman Liu Erfei, Morgan Stanley Asia general manager Ju Jia, Finance Research Institute (under the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences) director Li Yang, Renmin University professor Wu Xiaoqiu, Tsinghua University professor Wei Jie and other renowned experts and scholars.

The counselor group's main duty is to discuss governmental financial policy decisions and provide advice. The group will also organize for experts to consult and research subjects assigned by the government and provide opinions and proposals for the government and financial enterprises.

Beijing Banking Regulatory Bureau Set Up

By Zhang Zhan

Last Friday, Beijing Banking Regulatory Bureau, China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC)'s Beijing office, was set up, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported.

The Bureau will supervise the city's banking sector, a role currently served by the central bank's local branch. The bureau's main responsibilities include establishing the rules and regulations for implementation of supervision statutes and systems, checkups, establishment and modifi-

cation of financial institutions and their branch offices under the administration of the bureau, as well as analysis and reporting on related data and information on financial institutions and their branch offices.

The main supervision scope of Beijing CBRC covers banks, financial estate management companies, trust and investment corporations, and other financial organizations.

Sources form CBRC said that province level CBRC bureaus will be set up and opened in the near future.

Capital Steel Group to Quit Beijing

By James Liu

Beijing plans to move steel maker Capital Steel (Shougang) Group, one of the capital's biggest polluters, out of the city in 2012 to help clean the air, Deputy Mayor Lu Hao announced on October 8.

The relocation of Shougang, which employs more than 120,000 people and supports 55,000 retirees, has been planned as part of a campaign to clear the city's smoggy skies, Lu told reporters at a Hong Kong news conference.

In September Shougang closed down its last converter to help reduce pollution. To date, the steel complex has reduced its steel production capacity by two million tons. Its annual production capacity now stands at six million tons.

The company is building a new industrial area in Qian'an, in neighboring Hebei Province, with a yearly steel output of two million tons.

The company has also been setting up a series of new production lines to improve the structure of its products to meet market demands.

WTTC Optimistic about China Tourism

By Shan Jinliang

World tourist industry forum, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), has expressed its optimism for China's tourism in 2003 despite the massive impact of SARS, according to the latest report from the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) on Monday.

WTTC president Jean-Claude Baumgarten told the press on Monday that China will be the fourth largest tourism country in 2013, and the annual tourism growth in the coming 10 years will reach 10.9 percent.

The report raised a few suggestions for China's tourism administration, including the establishment of a ministerial level organization in charge of tourism and a policy of encouraging a flow of staff into the tourism industry. It also encouraged offering a two-week vacation with pay for Chinese employees, rather than the current three-week national holiday arrangement, as this would help reduce the burden of tourism peaks and damage to tourist facilities.

The president told Beijing Today on Monday that CNTA director He Guangwei would give feedback to the report, and that close talks between the two sides will be held soon.

Lieutenant Governor Hunt Leads Mission to China

By Sun Ming

A delegation from Nevada is now in China seeking opportunities to develop trade and tourism with Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Macau. This is the first time for the American state to send an official tourism and trade mission to China.

The delegation, which arrived in Beijing last Thursday, is led by Lieutenant Governor Lorraine Hunt of Nevada and consists of over 30 local business representatives including those from the state's Commission on Economic Development and the Nevada Commission on Tourism.

"China is the world's fastest growing economy and presents golden opportunities to develop and increase lucrative tourism and trade opportunities," Hunt said in a news conference held in Beijing on Tuesday. "This mission will open significant doors between China and Nevada and enable us to establish solid business connections. Nevada welcomes Chinese visitors to experience our world-class resort hotels, exciting attractions and friendly business environment."

The delegation which is now in Hong Kong has met with leaders of local agencies that govern tourism, trade, broadcast media and aviation in Beijing and Shanghai and will leave for Macau tomorrow.

Hunt said that Nevada hopes to begin direct flights from Las Vegas to China's cities in order to attract more Chinese tourists. "China has a large population. It would be magnificent if we got a little piece of the market for Nevada."

City Swings Into SARS Mode

By Shan Jinliang

With the capital anticipating another chill winter, Beijing's public health departments have intensified their efforts to combat the possible return of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

At a press conference held on Wednesday by the Beijing Municipal Information Office, Deng Xiaohong, the spokesperson for Beijing Municipal Bureau of Public Health said 1.5 million residents, including primary and middle school students, senior citizens, emergency unit doctors and public servants will be injected with flu vaccines in October in the hope of reducing the risk of misdiagnosing SARS, which has similar symptoms with flu.

Liang Wannian, deputy director of the bureau said 66 hospitals with designated fever units have been opened to city residents, following the release of the Beijing SARS Prevention and Treatment Plan on September 11. The plan lists the three levels of the SARS response system when one, six and 30 confirmed SARS cases are found in Beijing.

Despite the relatively small number of farmers in Beijing, said Liang, the city has never eased its efforts in SARS prevention in rural areas, and the authorities will conduct a health check on migrant workers in Beijing. They will be given equal treatment, at least as far as SARS is concerned.

To ensure an efficient response to SARS, the municipal government launched a drill relating to SARS before October 1 and medical rescue departments dealt with it comfortably, said Liang. The bureau has asked all the county and district hospitals to conduct similar medical rescue drills, added Liang.



Ding Lei No.1, personal assets 7.5 billion yuan



Rong Zhijian, No.2, personal assets 7 billion yuan



Xu Rongmao, No.3, personal assets 6.8 billion yuan



Lu Guanqiu No.4, personal assets 5.4 billion yuan



Chen Lihua, No.5, personal assets 4.8 billion yuan



Liu Yonghao, No.5, personal assets 4.8 billion yuan

New List Names Richest Chinese of 2003

By James Liu

Rupert Hoogewerf, compiler of *Forbes* magazine's first Chinese mainland "rich list," released his new, personally-compiled ranking of the 100 wealthiest people in this country on Thursday in partnership with UK-based publisher Euromoney.

Ding Lei, the 32-year-old chairman of NetEase.com, swept to the top place with a personal wealth of \$900 million, thanks to a 50-fold surge in the company's share price since the end of 2001. Ding, who was not even on last year's *Forbes* 100 richest people list, first worked at a local China Telecom bureau before setting up his own business in 1996.

Last year's No.1, Rong Zhijian, or Larry Yung, followed

Ding with an unchanged personal fortune of \$850 million. Rong owns Hong Kong-based CITIC Pacific Group, an arm of China International Trust and Investment Co.

Xu Rongmao, 53, ranked third with 6.8 billion yuan. His Shimao group is a major real estate developer in Beijing, Shanghai and Fuzhou.

Zhou Zhengyi, who was apprehended for fraud after being coming in eleventh on last year's list with \$320 million in assets, did not appear on the new ranking.

Signaling a significant shift from last year's list, three figures from the IT world were among the top 20 this year. Chen Tianqiao, who owns online games developer Shanda Networking Development, leapt to tenth

place with personal wealth of \$480 million. Charles Zhang, chairman of Sohu Inc, one of the three Chinese portal websites listed on Nasdaq, ranked twentieth with \$265 million in assets.

The domestic real estate industry is clearly still booming, accounting for 58 percent of the companies controlled by the listed individuals.

There are 40 new names on this year's list and the average personal wealth of those listed is \$230 million. "It is normal to see so many new people on the list, as the threshold has been raised to 900 million yuan (\$108 million) this year," said Hoogewerf.

The 100 tycoons' personal holdings total 190.7 billion yuan, equal to two percent of China's gross domestic product

last year. Guangdong Province appears to be China's wealth center, home to 22 of the listed individuals.

The rich list will be also published in *Chinamoney*, a special edition of *Euromoney* printed in Chinese. Hoogewerf teamed up with Euromoney in June after *Forbes* magazine announced earlier this year that it was terminating its four-year association with the chartered accountant.

Russell Flannery, chief representative of Forbes Shanghai Office, refused to comment on Hoogewerf's rich list, but earlier told reporters from *Nanfang Daily* that the *Forbes* rich list, which is planned to be released at the end of this month, would be "more accurate and authoritative" than last year's edition.



Ye Lipai, No.5, personal assets 4.8 billion yuan



Sun Guangxin, No.8, personal asserts 4.2 billion yuan



Liu Yongxing, No.9, personal asserts 4.1 billion yuan



Chen Tianqiao, No.10, personal asserts 4 billion yuan

PICC to List in HK, AIG to Buy 9.9 Percent

By James Liu

China's largest property insurer, People's Insurance Company of China (PICC) Property and Casualty, plans to raise up to HK\$5.109 billion (US\$654 million) from an initial public offering (IPO) on the Hong Kong stock market scheduled for November 6.

The stock listing will be the largest in Hong Kong this year and will make PICC the first giant insurance firm from the Chinese mainland to sell shares overseas.

China Life Insurance, the country's largest life insurer, is set to follow PICC with a share offering in Hong Kong by the end of this year that could raise about US\$2 billion. China's second largest life insurer, Ping An Insurance, is also said to be considering an IPO in the territory.

PICC, which holds a dominating 70 share of property and casualty premiums in the national insurance market, is offering 3 billion shares, or 28 percent of its enlarged share capital, at HK\$1.30 to HK\$1.70 each, reported the *Economic Observer* on October 13.

On Monday, American International Group Inc (AIG), the world's biggest insurer, announced plans to buy a 9.9 percent stake in PICC's IPO to get access to the company's sales outlets across China. That purchase would be worth about US\$200 million, but AIG did not disclose the settled price. A company spokesman in Hong Kong surnamed Kang confirmed the purchasing plan to *Beijing Today* but declined to offer further comments.

AIG has also announced its intention to sell health policies through PICC's 4,300 branches and offer training to PICC staff.

Official pricing for the IPO is expected to be set on October 30. PICC and the joint managers of the offering, Morgan Stanley and China International Capital Corp, held meetings with more than 150 analysts and fund managers in Hong Kong on Monday to promote the deal.

PICC expects to earn at least 1.43 billion yuan this year, up from just 278 million yuan in 2002, according to its preliminary listing document. The company's net profit plunged 80 percent last year partly due to an increase in the number of claims and a higher net loss from the trading of securities.

Its net earned premium is expected to grow by 8.5 percent this year to 39.48 billion yuan, and by 15.6 percent in 2004 to 45.64 billion yuan, according to a recent research document written by Morgan Stanley. That firm predicts PICC's net profit to jump nearly 60 percent to 2.35 billion yuan next year, thanks to higher investment income and net earned premiums.

PICC Property and Casualty was formed in July this year when its parent, formerly known as the People's Insurance Company of China, established 54 years ago, injected all of its commercial insurance operations into the listing vehicle.



Stefan Baron

Photo by Ayi

Country's Growth Has Wide Benefits

By Zhao Hongyi

Last Thursday, in a statement made to the Chinese press outside his company's office in Beijing's Ritan Park, Stefan Baron, chief editor of the German business magazine *Wirtschafts Woche* (Business Weekly), said that China must solve the problem of the heavy debt burdens of state-owned enterprises and domestic banks before pursuing further economic reform.

Baron argued that China's fragile banking system should have more channels for investment if it is to become healthy, and said the same for individuals, who can only deposit their personal savings in low-interest bank accounts or invest in the volatile domestic stock markets. "The system is unfair to individuals," he added.

Acknowledging that the revaluation of the Renminbi is an issue of wide discussion in Germany and Europe, Baron said, "We realize it is an issue of the Chinese. The Europeans do not have such a high political incentive in the discussion."

He also criticized the US on this issue. "American politicians have to find an excuse for the bad economic performance and high unemployment rate at home," he said.

Regarding Chinese companies moving overseas, Baron reminded them to "do comprehensive research, have a clear idea of what you want to do and cooperate with local employees."

Baron was in town to promote an 84-page special Chinese edition of his magazine. Though he and his publication have long had the target of issuing a Chinese version, the chief editor lowered his tone when asked whether regular publishing of a Chinese edition was in the works.

"No," he said. "We might publish twice each year, but not on a regular basis." Baron explained that one obstacle is the fact that China has yet to fully open its publishing industry, but did add that the domestic market is developing thanks to fierce competition.

Postal Services Seek Profits Through Insurance Sales

By Zhao Hongyi

On October 9, "World Post Day," Beijing Post launched sales of insurance products at its 452 post offices throughout the city.

Beijing Post announced that day it had reached agreements with insurance companies like China Life, China Ping'an, Pacific Life and Xinhua Life to act as their agent in selling life insurance products ranging from endowment to health, participating and accident.

The insurance deals are hoped to become a new source of profits for Beijing Post, which, like the postal services of other municipalities and provinces, has been struggling to find new avenues for business growth. China's postal industry has shown operational deficits since its founding and always relied on subsidies from the central government.

In 1988, after years of inflation rate growth, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, gave the nation's postal industry the OK to run deposit saving services.

Under the initial policy, China Post could deposit all the savings it had collected with the central bank at an annual interest rate two percent higher than the commercial rate it offered to customers. In the first half of this year, China Post received 4.131 percent interest on its deposits in the bank, while paying customers just 1.92 percent on their savings deposits. Such huge rate gaps allowed the postal service to pocket around 18 billion yuan annually just from interest returns.

That subsidizing scheme was cancelled in late July this year, forcing China Post to seek income through other channels. Many industry analysts believe the organization must return its focus to postal business, upgrade the quality of its services and explore new products in order to survive.

Beijing Post is not the first regional postal service to sell insurance products in its outlets. In August, Zhejiang Post launched similar services in cooperation with Huatai Insurance.

"It's time to reform," said Liu Yanming, deputy director of Beijing Post. "Everyone has to find their own ways to survive."

Motorola Enters Home Appliances Market

By James Liu

Motorola and Proviv International Holdings, Ltd. announced on October 11 in Shenzhen that they have signed an alliance agreement to begin the manufacturing and distribution of high quality display solutions, bringing the Motorola brand into China's home appliances market.

Initial products to be released will include liquid crystal display (LCD) computer monitors and LCD and plasma televisions, automotive video items and CD/DVD players, recorders and drives.

All the products share wired or wireless control through integrated systems than can connect to other home devices.

Yang Boning, an employee in the public relations department of Motorola's Beijing office told *Beijing Today* that Motorola would continue the production and distribution of mobile phones in this country.

Boom Days for Beijing Hyundai

By James Liu

By the end of September, Beijing Hyundai Motor Company had cranked out 40,000 Sonata sedans and earned a total sales volume of nearly 6.5 billion yuan. More than 68 percent of the parts for those cars are domestically made and that proportion is expected to reach 74 percent by the end of the year, according to Guo Qian, Beijing Hyundai deputy executive manager.

"Our sales target for this year is 50,000 units with a sales volume of 9 billion yuan," Guo announced at a news conference in Beijing on October 11. "We expect to sell 100,000 Sonata sedans next year, 300,000 the year after and have a production capacity of 550,000 cars by 2010."

Sino-German Joint Software Institute Established

By Hou Mingxin

The opening ceremony of the Sino-German Joint Software Institute was held at Beihang University in Beijing on Monday.

The new institute is made up of 30 researchers, 15 from China and 15 from Germany. Funding for the institute's research is being equally split by the Chinese and German governments.

The mission of the Sino-German Joint Software Institute is to study and design software strategies for the domestic software industry and government, to cooperate with the German-Sino Mobile Communication Institute, its sister organization, in researching advanced software and telecommunication technology and to incubate and support Chinese high-tech software companies.

Australia Backs Domestic Accounting

By Su Wei

One of Australia's premier organizations of finance, accounting and business professionals, CPA Australia, formerly the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants, celebrated the first anniversary of its Beijing Representative Office on Tuesday evening.

According to Australian Ambassador Alan Thomas, the office has played a key role in formalizing CPA Australia's involvement in the Chinese mainland market, which was previously overseen by the organization's Hong Kong branch. "Over the past 12 months, through the office we have expanded our feel for the local market and determined the role that CPA Australia can play in supporting the growth of the finance, accounting and business professions in China," he said at the ceremony. "Our relationships with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants (CICPA) and related organizations are an integral part of this ongoing growth."

China-UK Innovation Park Debuts in Cambridge

By Xiao Rong

A signing ceremony to mark the opening of the first China-UK Innovation Park in Cambridge, England was held Wednesday at the British Embassy in Beijing.

The first Chinese science incubator park in Europe, the China-UK Innovation Park was jointly established by the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology and Britain's Invest UK, aiming at providing a base for Chinese science and technology companies looking to set up shop in the UK and Europe.

"This park is the first of its kind for Chinese companies in all of Europe. It will serve as a platform for researchers, investors and business enterprises from both countries to work together and also act as a gateway for technology companies to enter the UK and the European markets," said Vice Minister of Science and Technology Ma Songde at Wednesday's ceremony.

The park, which was officially opened on September 24 in Cambridge, essentially serves as a low-risk platform for Chinese companies seeking access to research and development facilities to set up operations in the UK.

There are currently at least 250 domestic firms operating in the UK.

Bush Reaffirms "Strong Dollar" Policy



AFP Photo

Washington, October 14 (AFP) - US President George W. Bush said that he favored a "strong dollar" policy, adding that currencies should reflect the relative strengths of their national economies and government policies.

Asked about the dollar's value against the yen, Bush told a roundtable of Asian and Australian journalists: "I'm for a

strong dollar policy. We've had a strong dollar policy in this administration."

"Currencies ought to be valued based upon the respective strengths of the economies, based upon the policies of the governments," he added, "and markets ought to be evaluating our respective currencies."

Prodded on his view of Japan's policy of intervening in currency markets, Bush replied: "That's my view, that markets ought to be determining respective currencies."

The US leader leaves Washington Wednesday, bound first for California and then Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and finally Iraq war ally Australia.

Bush vowed to raise the issue of the relative values of Chinese and Japanese currencies against the dollar in upcoming meetings with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

"I'll remind them that this nation has a strong dollar policy, and we expect the markets to reflect the true value of currency," he told the reporters in a group interview to set the stage for his third trip to Asia since taking office.

"The way that currencies ought to be valued is based upon economic activity, a fiscal policy, monetary policy of their respective governments, the potential for growth, the potential for long-term viability of the economies," he said.

Bush also said he would discuss US job losses and the US trade deficit in talks with APEC leaders meeting in Thailand next week.

Analyst's Take:

A weak US dollar is believed to encourage US exports and help create jobs, though the real effect this time is not so obvious.

A weak dollar also discourages foreign capital from entering the country, supporting its financial industry and purchasing bonds and securities. This is of great importance to the US economy as well.

Therefore, the US government has to keep a balance in talking about the dollar. It is not upset to have a weak dollar, but will be if it's too weak. That explains why it is forcing major trading partners like China and Japan to increase their currencies' value and stressing its belief in a "strong dollar" policy.

Market speculation and demand should help prevent the dollar from sliding further. And considering the quality of the US economy, its advanced science and technology potential, dynamic free market economy, huge resources and consumer demand, the return of dollar value is expected, sooner or later.

— **Chen Baoshen, senior researcher, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences**

Lee Keeps Dad on Board

Singapore, October 12 (The Straits Times) - Lee Hsien Loong wants both his father Lee Kuan Yew and current prime minister Goh Chok Tong to remain in the cabinet to advise him, when he takes over as prime minister, probably sometime next year.

Deputy Prime Minister Lee made clear his thinking on the top three questions about political succession - the roles of Goh and his father - during an interview with *The Sunday Times* last week.

Mr Goh would be 'a very valuable member' of the Cabinet for his experience, his feel of the ground and rapport with the people, as well as his international experience in dealing with leaders in the region and around the world. "I will want to make the most of all that," said Mr. Lee.

He would like his father to stay on as an adviser in the cabinet, playing the same role he had in the last 13 years since handing over the premiership to Goh in November 1990.

Last month, Mr. Lee's father had said in an interview ahead of his 80th birthday that he did not plan to retire from politics as long as he was fit and able - an announcement welcomed by some but not others.

So if he decided that his

father had become a political liability one day, would Lee junior ask him to retire? "I would have to do that. That would be my job."

(Chua Mui Hoong)

Analyst's Take:

Since the beginning of the new century, Singapore's economy has seen fluctuations. The Asian financial crisis, Iraq war, SARS and terrorism are the external factors.

Internally, Singapore's economy relies heavily on electronic products and is finding it difficult to manage the trend towards globalization.

Secondly, a late upgrading of its industries and technologies hampered its economic growth.

High labor costs reduced its competitiveness worldwide.

The Singaporean government is encouraging the growth of the service industry.

Restructuring and downsizing the government is another step.

Singapore has signed free trade pacts with the US, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the EU. It is also negotiating pacts with Canada, South Korea, India and China.

— **Wang Xiaomin, senior researcher, Institute of Asia and Pacific Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences**

Video Reveals KFC Cruelty to Chickens

Bangalore, India, October 10 (AFP) - Animal rights group PETA Thursday unveiled video footage portraying cruelty meted out to chickens at an Indian farm which supplies Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and launched a new campaign calling for the closure of the fast food firm.

The 10-minute video showed chickens stuffed into overcrowded warehouses, leg deformities caused by genetic engineering, breeding and over-feeding, and chickens suffering at the hands of callous workers at the Venkateshwara Hatcheries based in the western city of Pune.

Ingrid Newkirk, director of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), unveiled the video to journalists in the southern city of Bangalore, which is home to India's only KFC outlet.

She said the footage directly

contradicted KFC's claim that it strictly adhered to animal welfare standards.

"The air inside these filthy barns reeks of ammonia fumes making it difficult for the birds to breathe. No one with a grain of compassion should set foot in KFC," she said of the video which was shot by an amateur filmmaker.

She said KFC killed more than 800 million chickens every year around the world and in most of the hatcheries the birds were genetically engineered to grow faster.

"Due to this they suffer from heart attacks and have painful crippling injuries as they become top heavy and cannot bear the weight of their bodies. They also cut off the beaks by hot wire," Newkirk said.

PETA wants an end to the genetic engineering of chickens, scalding and cruel human handling.



Ingrid Newkirk, director of PETA

AFP Photo



Urban traffic jams have long been a headache in Malaysia. The country's government is encouraging residents to use more public transportation tools.

Xinhua Photo

Japan to Propose FTA Talks with South Korea

Tokyo, October 13 (AFP) - Japan will propose starting talks for a free trade agreement (FTA) with South Korea later this month, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi said in an interview.

"We would be extremely happy to start negotiations with South Korea soon and we couldn't be happier if we could announce that we will start talks at the (upcoming) APEC summit," Kawaguchi told the *Financial Times* newspaper.

Her interview with the newspaper was published after reports that a senior South Korean official said Seoul was also hoping to announce the start of the FTA talks with Japan at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, with an aim to conclude the deal by the end of 2005.

The APEC summit will take place on October 20-21 in Bangkok, where Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is expected to meet South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun.

Japan has so far concluded only one FTA, with Singapore, removing import and export tariffs on 98 percent of goods traded between the two nations.

Japan is also negotiating with Mexico on a similar pact. But the sensitive issue of agricultural trade has delayed signing of the Japan-Mexico deal.

Analysts' Take:

Multilateral trade organizations like the WTO, regional trade and economic cooperation blocs like ASEAN and NAFTA, and bilateral free trade pacts are the three main forms of development in today's world trade and economic cooperation.

Multilateral trade organizations have potentially vast impact, but often cannot reach agreement due to the diversified interests of members.

Regional trade and economic cooperation blocs are easier to manage. But some blocs in Central and South America, Africa and the Middle East have failed.

Bilateral free trade pacts offer easy progress but at present exist mainly between parties that have little in common, like Singapore's free trade pacts with the US, EU and Australia.

— **Lu Bo, deputy director, Institute of World Economic and Trade Studies, CAITEC**



Yoriko Kawaguchi, Japanese foreign minister

AFP Photo

SEC Chief Urges Market Retooling

Washington, October 15 (Reuters) - Amid a governance crisis at the New York Stock Exchange, Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman William Donaldson on Wednesday outlined an ambitious agenda for reshaping the stock markets.

Donaldson, appointed SEC chief almost eight months ago, wants to push through an SEC overhaul of market mechanics to accommodate new, lightning-fast trading technologies, the rise of electronic markets and a range of other issues.

(Kevin Draubaugh)

Morgan Stanley Names New President

New York, October 13 (Reuters) - Morgan Stanley has named Stephan Newhouse, a head of its investment banking division and chairman of its international unit, as new president, replacing Robert Scott who is retiring.

Newhouse will be responsible for developing and maintaining client relationships across all businesses, according to a release, as well as leading efforts to develop the firm's international strategy for investment banking and other businesses.

(Jake Keaveny)

Disney and HP Partner

Los Angeles, October 14 (Techweb.com) - Walt Disney Co. and Hewlett-Packard last week formed a 10-year strategic alliance to refine consumer entertainment technologies by collaborating on everything from theme-park attractions to back-office IT systems to home networking gear.

HP and Disney will work together on the newest Disney World Epcot attraction, Mission: Space, and they'll jointly develop digital infrastructure technologies for securing content delivered over the Internet, as well as entertainment appliances for home networks, HP CEO Carly Fiorina and Disney president Bob Iger said during a webcast to disclose the alliance.

California Hit by Transport, Grocery Strikes

Los Angeles, October 14 (Reuters) - Southern California was gripped by crippling strikes on Tuesday by transport workers and grocery clerks that stranded thousands of mostly poor commuters across Los Angeles.

Around 2,000 mechanics went on strike just after midnight, joined by drivers and other transit employees. Some 70,000 unionized grocery workers have been walking picket lines at the region's three major supermarket chains since Sunday.

It was the second major work stoppage to hit Southern California this week, and in both cases contract negotiations broke down over issues related to trust funds that are designed to pay for employee health care.

(Dan Whitcomb)



AP Photo

Pizza Hut to Serve Healthier Pie

October 15 (USA Today) - Pizza Hut, the nation's largest pizza chain, on Wednesday introduced the Fit 'N Delicious pizza, a better-for-you pizza with about 25% less fat than its comparable Thin 'N Crispy pizza.

The key difference: less cheese, more sauce and fewer fatty toppings. The pizzas have half the cheese of regular Thin 'N Crispy and more tomato sauce. Vegetables or lean meats replace fatty toppings such as pepperoni or sausage.

Pizza Hut's move comes as the fast-food industry is doing cartwheels to make menus more appealing to the health conscious.

(Bruce Horowitz)

Samaranch Thanks Local Savior



Li Zhi proudly shows the contents of his letter from Juan Antonio Samaranch. Photo by Lily

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Doctor Li Zhi from the Wangjing Hospital received an unexpected letter of thanks last week from none other than Juan Antonio Samaranch, former chairman of the International Olympic Committee. The envelop Samaranch sent contained not only the letter, but also his picture, autograph, business card and the first day stamp cover named "Olympic Memories", which was

issued when Samaranch came to Beijing to promote his autobiography in July.

Three months ago, Li helped the former IOC chairman get back to his hotel after getting disoriented in the vast depths of Oriental Plaza. While shopping in the plaza, the doctor saw Samaranch surrounded by a group of people seeking his autograph. Li recognized that Samaranch was in fact seeking assistance, as he was not able

to find his way to the Grand Hyatt Beijing Hotel, in which he was staying.

When they got to the hotel, Samaranch autographed Li's shopping bag and presented him with an Olympic badge.

Last month, Li went to the office of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the 29th Olympiad to inquire about a cryptic addition to Samaranch's autograph. There, a clerk from the organization told

him that Samaranch had told them about Li and hoped his one-time guide would write him a letter. Li quickly sent a letter to Samaranch, recalling the day on which they met and expressing his respects.

The doctor was delighted to receive Samaranch's quick reply on October 8. According to the *Beijing Youth Daily* report, Li Zhi said he would be delighted to take Samaranch around town if he returns to Beijing in 2008.

Nonagenarian Visitor Celebrates Birthday

By Chen Ying

American Dr. Ann Marie Koller celebrated her ninetyeth birthday in Beijing on Monday while visiting her grandson, Anthony Simmons, a teacher at the Beijing Zhongguancun International School.

She arrived in the capital on September 29 for a one-month stay.

After retiring from nearly 40 years of teaching in 1978, Dr. Koller started writing and has published three books on German theater.

Simmons is the third generation of his family to work as a teacher, following his grandmother and mother. "All of us have also taught abroad. I worked in Germany and my daughter taught school in South Korea and Cambodia. Now my grandson has

come to China after teaching for six years in California," said Koller.

She recently finished a new book about famous Austrian ballet dancer Tilly Losch, for which she did one decade of research. Koller said, "I talked to people who knew her. I did research on all her letters and diaries. I visited Vietnam, London, New York and Austria by myself."

Before coming to China, she spent some of her time keeping up her German language skills in twice-weekly classes at Stanford University. "I don't have enough opportunities to speak German at home and I don't want to lose my ability," she said, before admitting she had not considered learning Chinese for fear it might be too difficult.

"I just got a visa to travel to



Dr. Ann Marie Koller

Photo by Aily

China for one month for my visit, but I hope to come back someday," said Koller. She also told *Beijing Today* she was impressed

with the city and wants to learn more about its history and people, adding, "Maybe someday I will write something about it."

Aquarium Hooks Million-Yuan Purse, Careless Owner

By Hans Leu

A former visitor to the Beijing Aquarium went back to the facility on October 10 to reclaim something very valuable she had left there a week before — a purse containing a bankbook for an account holding 1.8 million yuan.

The woman called the aquarium on October 3 to report the loss of the purse during her visit earlier that day. An aquarium employee took down her personal information and phone number and then spread the word about the lost item. The bag was found around one hour later. Inside were the deposit book, an identification card and 1.9 yuan in cash, just as the visitor had described over the phone.

However, when aquarium employees tried to call her back to tell her the good news, they found her mobile phone had been turned off. The woman later explained that she had mistakenly not given

the aquarium the number for the phone she used in Beijing but that for a phone she used in Tianjin that had no battery charge.

Her luck changed when a friend heard a report that the aquarium was searching for the owner of the missing purse. That friend passed on the information and she quickly contacted the aquarium to set up a meeting.

Yet her travails were far from over. It took her an hour to convince aquarium management that she was indeed the owner of the purse, mostly as a result of her vague descriptions of the item and its contents.

"She could not provide a complete and exact list of the contents of the purse," said Wu Zhaozheng, director of the aquarium's management office. In the end, she finally won the lost-and-found struggle by providing the correct registration date and amount of money in the valuable deposit books.

Lost Baton Sparks Massive Search

By Wang Fang

One man's stick is another man's treasure. Famed young disabled conductor Zhouzhou was overjoyed when his father told him his lost beloved baton had been recovered by the No. 4 guard team of the Dongcheng District Security Company, reported *Beijing Youth Daily* last Friday.

The baton had disappeared three days before at an event at the Temple of the Earth. Crowds of Zhouzhou's fans assembled at the park for a scheduled book signing by the popular conductor. To give his audience a special treat, he asked the event's organizers to play some music and gave an impromptu demonstration of his conducting prowess, followed by a short dance performance to the song *Lift Your Veil*.

Before the end of the event, his father had to come to his aid as the crowd of audience seekers would not wane. The young man put his baton down on a desk

to focus on the task ahead, and when the signing was finished, he was quickly whisked away while his father stayed behind for an interview.

Neither thought about the baton, until Zhouzhou suddenly realized he had lost it while in a car going back home. According to the *Beijing Youth Daily* report, he was devastated. The treasured baton was a gift from John van Deuren, the Canadian conductor of the Taipei Sinfonietta and Philharmonic Orchestra, used by Zhouzhou only on important occasions.

Xu Yinxin, captain of the No. 4 guard team, on duty the day of the book signing, saw the newspaper's report and led the search for the missing baton.

The guards returned to the site where the event was held and then conducted a blanket search of the park. Guard Xu Hongjie finally found the baton in open desk drawer.

Donated Bike Represents Modern Marco Polos

By James Liu

A bicycle made from components of nine original bikes used for a 12,000-kilometer cross-continental group ride was given to the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) on October 9 at the Cultural Institute of the Italian Embassy in Beijing.

The red bicycle was handed over by the Marco Polo • Bridge of Peace 2001 Association, which organized nine amateur Italian bicyclists to cycle from Venice to Beijing. The riders, with an average age of 55, started their journey on April 25, 2001 at Venice's St. Mark Square and arrived at

Tian'anmen Square 96 days later. Their route followed that of the first Italian visitor to China, Marco Polo, who arrived in the country at the time of the Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368).

Two of the participants in the grueling journey attended the donation ceremony and expressed hopes that Chinese bicyclists would do similar rides back to Venice before the opening of the 2008 Olympic Games.

The event was one in a series of activities organized by the Cultural Institute of the Italian Embassy under the theme of "Marco Polo — Yesterday and Today" from October 6 to 10.

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Online Survivor!

By Wei Tingyu

At 3pm on October 15, a girl and a boy stumbled out of two glass cubes in "Cyber Square" near the Asian Games Village in Beijing and took their first breath of fresh air in five days. Bian Jing, 20, a college girl and Zhao Bing, 26, an engineer, had just survived the On-line 100, China's second Web Survival Contest, co-sponsored by Tsinghua Unisplendour and the Cyber Square. Their task – to make it through 100 hours surviving only by using the internet to acquire their daily necessities. They were accompanied during the challenge by Zeng Pengyu, a reporter from *Beijing Youth Daily*, who also tried his hand at the challenge.

Although Bian was the clear favorite with netizens following their progress, the contest ended in a draw, both of them winning a fashionable laptop.

They're off

Amenities in the glass rooms in Cyber Square only included a laptop, a simple bed without quilt or pillow, a desk and chair, and a green toilet. Each challenger was given a budget of 3000 yuan, held at China Merchant Bank, to buy their goods in the next few days.

On the first day, the challengers had to purchase lunch and ten other necessities including a quilt, basin and digital camera. Bian ordered Kentucky fried chicken through eguo.com and Zhao purchased a bottle of juice and a bowl of noodles. Zeng, the reporter, tried ordering his lunch through some famous websites but found when the food arrived that the companies only accepted payment by cash. So even though it may have smelled good, he had to head back to his computer. "The alleged slogan of 'order by the internet' has yet to achieve the goal of 'payment by the internet'," he said.

On the first day, Bian finished her tasks first, having spent 910 yuan. Zhao came second but had spent just 411 yuan, while Zeng came last and had spent 780 yuan.

Not what it says in the brochure

On the second day, the competition organizers asked the challengers to get their food from other websites. "They found we spent most money eguo.com and were afraid the contest would become Eguo survival," Zeng reported. Unfortunately, YongHe King (www.yonghe.com.cn), which provided food for participants in the last Web Survival Contest, was not available this time as it was upgrading its computer system.

Zeng reported that most companies in Beijing listed on the Internet claiming to offer online ordering were unable to supply any meals. "But for Shanghai companies it would not be a problem," he said.

At 11 pm on October 12, the second day of the competition, the organizers bowed to the unavoidable and allowed the starving contestants to use cash to buy their food.

Psychological crisis

The third day was supposed to be a day of learning on the Internet. However, the stress was beginning to show in the contestants who were getting increasingly irritable and bothered. Having had only 10 hours sleep in the past 50 hours, they were becoming more and more impatient in their communications on the Internet, particularly the two real challengers. Psychotherapy, rather than learning, turned out to be the order of the day.

Hu Ping, PhD of Psychology from Renmin University, was called in to diagnose the challengers' unrest and anxiety. Zeng reported Hu talked to the challengers through his own laptop and web camera, and

asked Bian and Zhao to imagine themselves performing the same tasks but on a beach or in grasslands. It seemed to do the trick. "The challengers' quietness was restored, finally," Zeng reported.

Which one do you prefer?

On the fourth day, the challengers' ability to communicate online and their ability to gain supporters on the Internet was tested. Zhao was considered to be better at this by the local media. One of the girls who supported him said it was because he looked sincere and reliable, a pleasant young man who could be trusted, she told *Beijing Youth Daily*. But Bian took 70% of the support in the Internet poll.

On the last day, an e-business day to practice web auctioneering, Bian succeeded in selling a toy duck for 17 yuan, and a set of cups for the shockingly high price of 600 yuan.

Too easy?

Compared with the first competition four years ago, the equipment was a lot more advanced. The Windows 95 computer software system had been replaced by Windows XP and the weighty desktop had given way to a more powerful laptop.

But as the reporter Zeng noticed, there is still something smothering the success of the web industry, which revealed itself in the tests on the first two days. He pointed out the failures and embarrassment in purchasing essential commodities and food in Beijing and pointed out the hidden obstacles in using the net.

Some people wrote to Sina.com, saying living on 3000 yuan for five days was too easy and that anyone familiar with the Internet would be capable of that. They thought living on 30 yuan would be a more acceptable challenge.

Huang Junjie, a senior official with Tsinghua Unisplendour said the goal of the activity was to convey the concept of online life to the public and search for possibilities and problems in its application. It was also intended to display the real online web life in a more transparent form, which is why it was staged in a kind of "show" format with the glass cubes.



Bian Jing faces the media.

Photos by Jackey



Staff close the glass cubes in "Cyber Square".



Bian Jing (left), Zeng Pengyu (middle) and Zhao Bing.



Zhao Bing (left), Zeng Pengyu (middle) and Bian Jing survived the contest.

Panda Bonanza

By Wang Fang/Wang Wei

Recently, good news has been pouring in about baby pandas being born in zoos and reserves around the world, from Beijing to San Diego in the United States. And at Sichuan Wolong Giant Panda Research and Breeding Center, five baby pandas were born in August.

It makes a happy change from the usual news. Pandas are notoriously slow in producing young and the species is endangered as a result. It's difficult for the bears to become pregnant, and hard for their cubs to survive. So scientists in China and around the world have been working on measures to persuade pandas to mate and to better protect their young. Research has been conducted into pandas' living habits, physiology, common diseases, and best breeding methods. China has already made great progress and the survival rate of panda cubs has risen to over 90%.

Niuniu from Beijing

At 8:18 am on August 24, Niuniu from Beijing Zoo gave birth to a panda cub. This is the first panda cub to be born at the zoo in three years. Niuniu is also the first panda among the generation born in the 1990s in Beijing Zoo to become a mother. Li, the chief-keeper for pandas at the zoo, was quoted in *Beijing Youth Daily* saying the birth indicated that Niuniu's generation was coming to maturity and that more cubs should arrive in the next few years.

On August 25, *Beijing Youth Daily* visited the Panda House in Beijing Zoo and saw the sign "Do Not Disturb" hanging outside the entrance. Niuniu had given birth inside and was now being observed as she lay, protecting her cub. Niuniu was curled up on the ground, so it was difficult to get a view of her baby. The keeper explained that Niuniu put the baby on her chest in order to keep it warm since the baby did not have any fur yet. Ten minutes later, the baby gave out a cry and Niuniu opened her paws to have a look. *Beijing Youth Daily* immediately nipped in with a camera and took a snap of the cub. It was like a pink mouse with its eyes closed, and was as big

as a man's fist. The keeper said Niuniu seemed like a good mother, having kept the same position to hold her baby for two days.

The Panda House has been turned into a temporary office and dormitory for the keepers. A monitor on the ceiling keeps an eye on Niuniu and her baby 24-hours a day and the keepers are taking notes of the situation in detail.

Happy and sad news from Bai Yun in America

On August 20, Bai Yun gave birth to a panda cub in San Diego Zoo, south California. However, according to previous examinations, Bai Yun should have had twins. Two days later, there was still no sign of the other cub. According to the zoo spokesman, the second fetus probably just didn't make it. Even though it was a great pity, the zoo was overjoyed to have a new panda cub. Bai Yun is taking care of her baby, and both of them are well.

Bai Yun came to San Diego from the Wolong Giant Panda Protection Center. It is the second time this 13-year-old panda has given birth since it came to America seven years ago. In 1999, scientists from the zoo performed artificial insemination on her successfully, and her baby Hua Mei is the first panda in America to have survived to adulthood. Hua Mei is still living in San Diego Zoo as well.

Two pairs of twins in Sichuan

In August, happy news also came from Wolong Giant Panda Research and Breeding Center. On August 14, Panda No.20 successfully gave birth to twins. On August 17, Yingying, another panda from the center, gave birth to twins as well. On August 20, 14-year-old Leilei gave birth to a panda cub. All together, five panda cubs were born in the same month.

On August 17, Yingying gave birth to a panda cub. The researchers were initially worried it would be her only child after observing her for two hours. However, at around 8:10 am, another little cub popped out. Yingying is the center and probably the world's star panda having now given birth to four babies since 1988. And she's only 12 years old, so hopefully she's not finished yet.



Spin Me Right Round

By Guo Yuandan

Liu Wenjun is not your average taxi driver. "People always ask me why I spend my money on dancing lessons instead of more practical things. My answer is I love ballet."

Inspired by Swan Lake

Liu Wenjun's father was a clarinet player, and he encouraged his son to be musical. In his childhood, Liu learned to play the clarinet, piano and violin. On weekends, his family would have music performances in their small house. Many of his father's friends would come over and Liu was always excited to play for the crowd.

However, he found practicing everyday was boring and he couldn't stick to it. Like other kids, Liu admired film stars. "At that time, I liked the actress Huang Wanqiu, who played the title role in *Liu Sanjie*, a kind of folk movie about a clever beauty. I was mad about her." But growing up during the Cultural Revolution made it hard for Liu to indulge in his love of art.

What brought Liu into the world of ballet was *Swan Lake*. "My father took me to see *Swan Lake* when I was a kid, but I was too young to remember anything." Years later, however, he saw a scene from it in a Russian movie. Seeing the graceful movements of the dancers, Liu was transfixed. After the Cultural Revolution, when *Swan Lake* was allowed to be performed again in China, Liu's father brought him to see it a second time, and this time he was more appreciative. Watching the dancers on stage, Liu decided he wanted to become a dancer himself.

Secret hobby

After graduating from junior high school, Liu Wenjun joined the army in Qinghe, Beijing in 1981. "The movie *Shaolin Temple* was very popular that year. A lot of my comrades in the army were from Henan. They had practiced kung fu since childhood. So I begged one of them to teach me." Liu practiced the various moves, thinking such exercises would be helpful in getting into ballet in the future.

Liu returned home to Beijing after one year in the army and was assigned to a factory as a worker. One day he noticed a recruitment poster for ballet students in the

‘I don’t understand what ballet means to me. They always ask me why I practice ballet since I am so old. I couldn’t live like my parents: just going to work and going home.’



Now hold that position...



Having a break

Photos by Li Shuzhuan

cultural and recreation center of Xicheng district. "I was very excited. I said to myself that I must sign up," Liu says.

At that time Liu earned 90 yuan every month. The fee for the ballet lessons was 30 yuan. "I didn't dare tell my parents. They thought I should work hard and be a model worker. If they had known about it, I wouldn't have had the lessons. Every month I gave 40 yuan to my mother for the family's expenses, so I was able to take part in the lessons." Along with Liu, there were three other boys in the class. "There weren't many boys taking ballet classes at that time, but the teachers and the girls in the class didn't think it was strange. I put my heart and soul into learning ballet."

In theory, the ideal age to start learning ballet is five years old when the bones are not fully formed. That way they can develop to accommodate the unique stresses that ballet places on dancers. Liu was 21 when he started, so practicing was very difficult. The lessons were twice every week. In order to catch up with the rest of the class, Liu practiced again and again in his spare time. He was constantly wearing out his shoes and had to buy a new pair every two weeks.

"I was an electrician in the factory and I used to find some time to practice. One time, unfortunately, I kicked the power switch. It shut down the whole factory. Fortunately my supervisor immediately switched it back on. When the boss asked what had happened, my supervisor told him it was a problem with the switch, otherwise I would have been punished," Liu says. "From then on I didn't practice on duty."

Satisfaction

Three months after Liu had started his classes, the Central Ballet Dance Troupe started to recruit amateur students. Liu took part in the examination and passed. "I was very excited. I'd only been learning a short time, so I felt encouraged to exercise harder."

Liu found himself having to get up at 5:30 in the morning everyday and cycling to the Academy of Chinese Traditional Opera. He had to be at work by 7 o'clock. "It was very hard but it was also a good time. Sometimes I wanted to

sleep more, especially when the day before had been very busy. But I told myself that I must persist, or maybe I would not be able to unbend my leg tomorrow."

"I know why I've been able to keep on exercising for 20 years, no matter how difficult it's been," Liu says. "Every time I stand before the huge glass, I feel excited. Spinning on the tips of my feet gives me such a sense of satisfaction. The older I get, the more proud I am that I can still do it. I remember once some young people saw me dancing. They were so surprised that I could stretch my leg over my head, while they could not."

Liu enjoys his ballet, even though his parents are not so enthusiastic. He still keeps it a secret from most of his colleagues. "My colleagues don't understand what ballet means to me. They always ask me why I practice ballet since I am so old. Ballet has become a part of my life, and it makes me feel great. I couldn't live like my parents: just going to work and going home. I'm living a wonderful and colorful life," Liu says.

Happy at the wheel

Thanks to his ballet dancing, 40-year-old Liu looks much younger than his age. "In general, men in their 40s have a beer belly for lack of exercise, and they might suffer illness in old age. But I have none of those problems." And there are other benefits for dancers. "Our backs are upright all the time, whether sitting or standing."

Though ballet is his real love, Liu takes his current job as a taxi driver seriously. "At work, I am a driver. I must serve my customers well." Liu learns English in his spare time in order to communicate with tourists. "If I went to France and a taxi driver was able to tell me the history of the Eiffel Tower, I would be very pleased. I'd like to be able to do this for my customers."

Liu still has his ballet lessons twice every week at Beijing Dance Academy. "Every time I put on my dancing clothes, I feel many years younger." It seems performing is in his soul. Liu is often asked to be the MC at friends' weddings. "Friends say I am always humorous and can make them smile. They ask me why I can be so happy, only being a taxi driver," Liu says. "I tell them it is a secret. In fact, it's ballet that lightens my life."

Sing Me a Story

By Yi Yi

In Wumudi Village, a remote mountainous village in Miyun County, northeast of Beijing, a band of elderly folk artists are preserving an ancient form of storytelling performance.

Called Wuyin Dagū, the performance consists of stories sung to the accompaniment of a small drum and four other instruments. The five-member band, of which the youngest is 56 and the oldest 76, has been performing together for two decades. When they were young, there were many Wuyin Dagū troupes, but today, theirs is the only one remaining.

The five instruments used by the band members caused quite a stir when they were exhibited at the first Beijing Folk Art Competition in 1998, winning first prize in the folk collection category.

An ancient tradition

Wuyin Dagū belongs to the big family of Quyi, a general term for the folk art forms rich in local flavor, such as ballad singing, storytelling and *xiansheng*, or cross-talk. The word *wuyin* refers to the five instruments used in this particular art form (*wu* – five, *yin* – sound), and *dagū* is the drum played by the singer of the troupe.

A Wuyin Dagū performance consists of five people, with five musical instruments and no stage scenery. The five musical instruments are the waqin (a seven-stringed plucked instrument), *daqin*, *sanxian*, *sihu* and a drum. The singer stands in the middle, with bamboo clappers in his right hand and a drumstick in his left.

The stories are usually ancient tales with many chapters.

Sometimes one story, told in nightly installments, could take as long as a year to complete. A short piece of only a few verses can take just minutes.

The five performers, all of whom learned their skills from their fathers, have no idea how the form originated. Qi Dianzhang, 76, has been performing Wuyin Dagū for 65 years. He told *Beijing Today*, "We don't know when Wuyin Dagū began. My father told me that my great-grandfather was a Wuyin Dagū performer."

The history of this ancient art remains a mystery to music historians also. Liu Xiaoping, a professor of the Central Conservatory of Music, told *Beijing Today* that there are no written records about Wuyin Dagū. "I think

An ancient storytelling tradition teeters on the brink of extinction



The troupe performs at Qi Dianzhang's courtyard. Left to right, Qian Dianzhang, Li Maosheng, Jia Yunming, Qi Dianming, Chen Zhenquan.

Photo by Cheng Gong

Wuyin Dagū might have a longer history than its counterparts still on the stages of Beijing, such as Beijing Qinsu, Jingyun Dagū and Meihua (plum blossom) Dagū, performance styles that proliferated in the east of Beijing," he said.

Luan Guijuan, director of the National and Folk Music Research Department at the National Music Research Institute praised the troupe highly after hearing their performance. "It was the first time I saw a real waqin, I'd only seen pictures previously in books on Tang Dynasty (618-907) musical instruments."

Five old performers

Qi Dianzhang, the oldest member of the troupe, used to enjoy playing along with his father in the village when he was a child. Later he went on to work with other performers. "In the past, there were many other bands besides us. Every troupe had its own characteristics. If we happened to meet another during a performing tour, we'd exchange our

experiences," Qi told *Beijing Today*, "Now we are the only one left." Qi can play all the five instruments, and he is especially skilled at the *daqin*.

As those performers older than him passed away one by one, Qi formed a new band with the other four from his village in 1980.

Li Maosheng, 56, the singer, is the youngest of the five. As the soul of the band, a singer must be capable of versatile facial expressions, expressive body language and have clear enunciation, all qualities Li possesses. He not only can sing stories that are centuries old, he can also compose new pieces describing events and society today.

The other three members of the troupe are *sihu* player Qi Dianming, Waqin player Chen Zhenquan, and Jia Yunming, who plays the *sanxian*. The five have lived in the same village all their lives. They know each other very well, and show an extraordinary level of coordination

in their performances.

After watching the performance, Wang Xiaoming, a *yangqin* graduate at the Central Conservatory of Music, described the quintet's cooperation as unparalleled, declaring, "Even the Chinese Folk Music Orchestra couldn't play better than those five folk artists."

Yet, these five men cannot read or write, and do not read music. The art has been passed down orally, from generation to generation. Their harmonious performance is a result of decades of practicing.

Professor Liu Xiaoping declared the five men to be "national treasures." Qi Dianzhang said, with typical modesty, that it is because they are the only ones left. "I don't think our performance warrants such a title. I feel happy enough when playing, and I never care about what people might think about us."

The troupe usually performs for weddings and funerals in the villages nearby, and makes little money.

Sometimes people pay, sometimes they do not, according to Qi Dianming, "We like Wuyin Dagū. We don't do it for the money, the five of us gathering together to perform gives us satisfaction enough."

According to an old Chinese saying, "great wisdom is hidden among the common people." Qi Dianzhang might personify this idiom. He is not only a proficient musician, but also a musical instruments craftsman.

He bought his *daqin* many years ago for two dou (30 kilograms) of rice. Liu Xiaoping said it has a history of at least 150 years. Because the instrument is so rare these days, Qi has no choice but to continue using it, repairing it when it is necessary.

Recently he lent it to the Central Conservatory of Music, which has offered to make a new one for him. "Some say our instruments have a high historic value. They will provide us with new ones and put the old ones on show. Before, we had no idea of their value, they are just the tools for our performance."

An endangered species

"Many people say what an interesting thing that these old people can perform so well. I am proud of myself when I hear such comments. However, I'm also worried about the future of Wuyin Dagū," said Qi Dianzhang.

He recalled that often in the past, the audience did not want to leave after the group finish their performance, "But now with so many new entertainments, young people are turning their eyes away from us."

Though the sons and grandsons of the five also learned to perform, they are not as skilled as their teachers. More to the point, they are not interested in carrying on the ancient tradition. As far as the youngsters are concerned Wuyin Dagū is an anachronism, and few are willing to spend time practicing.

The Central Conservatory of Music is doing what it can to stop the art form into extinction. New instruments have been made, copied from those the band members are using, and the band will be invited to perform at the university.

Liu Xiaoping told *Beijing Today* they are planning various musical activities in the village to encourage the children to learn Wuyin Dagū. "We'll try our best to preserve it. And I believe it must have a new development."

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Biennale Buzz

Domestic and foreign art insiders sound off on Beijing's first biennial art extravaganza

By Darlene Lee

Over 100,000 visitors have been to the nine venues of Beijing's first ever biennial art bonanza, according to the office of the Biennale's organizing committee. The event, set to close next Monday, and the various unofficial satellite exhibitions around it, seem to have succeeded in the aim of enhancing Beijing's cultural influence internationally while giving domestic audiences unprecedented access to contemporary global high culture.

Tao Qin, director of the Beijing Biennale office, has expressed great satisfaction with the outcome of the event. "The positive impressions of most participating artists and visiting curators and critics have been most gratifying. That our first Biennale has been done on such a large scale and to such high quality has impressed everyone," she gushed.

The reactions of art insiders visiting from around the world have seemed largely positive, with the Chinese Section clearly the star of the show. Chicago-based art critic and freelance curator Chien Hui Kao said, "The most impressive part of the Beijing Biennale for me was the Chinese Section in the National Art Museum. I was surprised that some of the young artists' concepts would be accepted there, as I expected the Cultural Office in Beijing would be more conservative. The Biennale presented many life values from different generations, demonstrating a positive attitude towards accepting the changing perspectives of life in modern China."

Works at the National Art Museum include the sculptures *Totem I and Totem II* by Jiao Xingtao, traditional heroic god-like figures in martial poses pieced together from rusty pans and metal parts, an ironic commentary on what "Made in China" means today. The sprawling jute weaving and braiding entitled *The Chinese Roots* by Guo Zhenyu and others put a new twist on the oft-quoted 5,000 years of cultural roots.

Weng Ling, director of Shanghai's Gallery of Art (Three on the Bund) was positive about the unofficial efforts represented by the spate of satellite exhibitions opening around the Biennale, noting, "Actually, I've spent quite some time in the satellite exhibitions. It is very encouraging to see the intensity and the seriousness of

From both the Biennale and the satellite exhibitions, I get the impression that the contemporary art circles in Beijing are divided into two parts. The environment of division seems to inform the spirit of contemporary art here, giving the contemporary art scene much space to develop.

— Chicago-based art critic Chien Hui Kao

many contemporary artists. It also shows the desire of many emerging artists to communicate with the public directly, which sets the stage for other positive developments to come in the near future."

The clear split between the official world of the Biennale and the unofficial world of the satellite exhibitions does not seem to have escaped the notice of visiting curators and art critics in particular. Kao elaborated, "From both the Biennale and the satellite exhibitions, I get the impression that the contemporary art circles in Beijing are divided into two parts. The environment of division seems to inform the spirit of contemporary art here, giving the contemporary art scene much space to develop."

"The Beijing Biennale was much more conservative than the Shanghai Biennale or the Guangzhou Triennale. I think that many of the artists represented in these satellite galleries show the true spirit of the city, and are closer to the rapid changes taking place in the country," said Betti Sue Hertz, curator of contemporary art at the San Diego Museum of Art.

Indeed, the event seems to have distinguished itself from other events in China and abroad that sound similar on paper. Weng explained, "The Beijing Biennale attempts to broaden the scope of a Biennale from a typical national fine art exhibition to an international art exhibition. I think this event has demon-

strated an enormous effort that the institution has put forward to achieve such a project."

Unlike the Shanghai Biennale, which is "trying to complement an established system of international Biennales, the Beijing Biennale is trying to revise and reinvent the model of national fine arts exhibition," continued Weng. "Beijing as the art and cultural center has to bear the responsibility of representing the diverse interests of many artists in this nation. Shanghai is much more oriented towards itself as a city, open to different conditions."

With notable exceptions such as the mixed-media combination piece *Congratulations on the Fall* by Icelander Pjetur Stefansson, the International Section seems to have packed considerably less punch. Hertz opined, "The Western section seemed to be organized in the visual terms set up by the Eastern section. What I mean by this is that there were many works that could dialogue with the traditional ink paintings that dominated the tone of the Eastern section. Unfortunately, the Western section lacked many of the important artists that I was hoping to see. I am confident that Beijing audiences would appreciate seeing the best work from the West."

Kao concurred, "The International Section this time was too commercial. Rather than being part of the Biennale, it became a side dish."



Visitors cluster around *Intimacy*, a piece in the French Autumn Salon at the National Gallery of Fine Arts.

Photos by Miao Yajie



The Chinese Roots by Guo Zhenyu and others



Eternity Bikes by Ai Weiwei in the unofficial Left Hand, Right Hand satellite show.

From this first step, the Beijing Biennale can be expected to develop considerably by the next time around. Kao expressed hopes "to see better organization of the satellite exhibitions and real international contemporary art in the International section."

Despite her slight misgivings about the event, Hertz was very positive about the future of contemporary art in China. "I do think that there will soon be an integration of traditional views on art and the avant-garde in presentation opportunities, as in the artistic realm there is constant dynamic cross-over between these two camps. I think I will see more inclusion of avant-garde artists next time I come to the Beijing Biennale. I also hope to see more great artists from the West represented. This will assist in the understanding of how Chinese art fits into the global context," she said.

For the next Beijing Biennale scheduled for 2005, the only thing director Tao Qin definitely plans is to get more help: "Everyone had to do two or three jobs to bring this show off, we didn't realize how labor intensive it would be. So hopefully next time we'll have more staff."

The Beijing Biennale runs through next Monday at the National Museum of Fine Arts and the China Millennium Monument Museum.

American Chinese artist Darlene Lee is a frequent contributor to Beijing Today.

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River Dance on stage at the Great Hall of the People

Photos by Cui Jun

Beijing International Drama Festival

By Lun Bing

After a colorful 18 days, the curtain fell on the first Beijing International Drama Festival Tuesday. Through the 23 featured productions, Beijing audiences experienced the charisma of Beijing as a cultural metropolis, the prosperity of the capital's performance market, as well as the artistic sensation brought by the various styles and forms of drama.

From September 27 to October 14, drama, opera, dance, puppetry and Chinese opera took the stage in turn. The Chinese opera covered a wide range from different regions, including Peking Opera, Kunqu from Jiangsu, Yueju from Shanghai, Huangmeixi from Anhui and Yuju Opera from Henan. The number of spectators exceeded two million.

Social and economical benefit

Peking Opera appeared in the late 18th century, the product of a marriage of Aihui and Hubei, as well as some other local operas.

It came to dominate the local cultural scene, particularly with the rise of such stars as Mei Lanfang and Cheng Yanqiu. Today, troupes like The People's Arts Theater of Beijing carry on the tradition. The successful

operation of the international drama festival can be viewed as evidence of the overall development of show business in recent years.

The opening show of the gala, *Aida*, with its extravagant cast and staging not only aroused the attention of the audience, but also of enterprises such as the South Korean-based Hyundai Motor. And the Irish *River Dance*, as the closing show, won the hearts of all the audience. Tickets for the two additional afternoon shows all sold out, making it the best-selling performance during the whole festival.

Tradition Vs. vogue

The repertoire of the first International Drama Festival contained not only the best in traditional style performance, but also the most popular shows presenting the latest trends of international theater. Some of the traditional performances are seeking new development in terms of stage forms; some chose to adopt ancient scripts, some sought to absorb the essence of other forms of art, in an attempt to meet with the aesthetic demand of the contemporary audiences.

The return to the most ancient performing forms in Peking Opera, *Zhang Xie*, the *No. 1 Scholar*, to the



Li Yan, as Emperor Qianlong, and Chen Shaolan, as Prime Minister Liu Yong, in the Peking Opera performance of Zaixiang Liu Luoguo.

transformation of opera to musical in *Chang Hen Ge*, all put the audience in the first place. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* by three Australian artists was highly appraised by the young audience for their superb technique and bold adaptation of Shakespeare, combined with modern comic performance.

A performance by Swiss theater troupe Mummenschanz told everyday-life stories with dream-like creatures and characters in musks demonstrating the charm of contemporary drama without limits.

festival introduced a competition mechanism to the capital's stages without obvious intention. Competition is everywhere: classic versus modern, one theater company versus another, by presenting the same play, and one art form verses another, with productions of the same play, among which the two version's of *Zhao, the Orphan* was the most conspicuous. Well-known director Lin Zhaozhao's version moved the audience with its grand scope and production, while Tian Qinxin's version seems to have a very close relationship with the audience, the shock and sensation it brought to the audience was imminent.

Audiences had markedly different reactions to the two versions. Two established directors chose to adopt the same ancient Chinese classic play, and bring it into the limelight at the same time, is a phenomenon that can only be seen on today's stage.

The first International Drama Festival kicked off a busy season of stage performances, the volume of the audience proves the power of drama remains competitive. Theater-going is returning as a popular part of the modern lifestyle for Beijingers.

Comment from the audience:

Wu Huilan, after *Aida*
"To see *Aida* is to experience a sense of grandeur. I am a frequent opera-goer, but *Aida* is so different from those I have seen before. I went to pop concerts when I was young, but with the passing of time, opera and ballet have replaced pop music, I feel more comfortable watching opera."

Tao Li, after seeing two versions of *Zhao, the Orphan*, she enjoyed Tian Qinxin's version better
"I think the ending of this version is more moving, the performance of the actors more powerful, especially Ni Dahong. Besides, the way the cast responded to the curtain call was also very special, making the audience reluctant to leave the theater after the curtain fell."

Yin Hui, after performance by Mummenschanz
"I never imagined a drama could be like this."

Gu Changhai, after Kunqu Opera, *A Thousand Year Old Romance* (*Huanmen Zidi Cuo Li Shen*)

"I thought I'd come just for ten minutes, to get a glimpse of what Kunqu Opera is like, but I stayed for the whole show. I never knew Kunqu Opera was so fabulous. The love between the man and the woman was so pure and sincere, and the way they expressed their love were so mild and reserved. The traditional culture of China is great, it is a pity we know so little about it.

Zhao Zhao, after *River Dance*

I enjoyed the energy of the production, and the dancers were certainly skilled, but I felt the whole show was too commercial. Simple and cheap looking special effects at the expense of depth and authenticity. Irish dance can be truly moving, and there are some great Irish theater companies performing wonderful, inspiring contemporary theater. I wish we could see one of those in Beijing.

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Hopes High for New NBA Season



2003 NBA No.1 draft pick LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers shoots over Ben Wallace of the Detroit Pistons last Wednesday during a preseason game at the Palace of Auburn Hills in Michigan.

Photo by Photocome

By Hou Mingxin

Set to kick off on October 28, the 2003-2004 NBA season promises to be interesting, with no team heavily favored to take the league's 58th season.

Los Angeles Lakers: built for the title?

The Lakers are in for a season unlike any other. Off-court, they are sure to face unprecedented distractions due to Kobe Bryant's legal troubles. On-court, with the signing of future Hall of Famers Gary Payton and Karl Malone, they will have to find a way to get their four 20-point-per-game scorers to work together. This awesomely talented veteran line-up seems to have already adopted the team-first mentality that could lead them to a championship.

"I figure there are going to be nights when it's my night," Karl Malone told NBA.com. "Some nights, it'll be another guy's night. You just have to take advantage of the situation. When someone's on a roll, you feed that roll. The important thing is to stay together as a team and come together as a team. But the possibilities are unbelievable."

This is a team built purely for a title run with the team's championship hunger most significantly fueled by stars Payton and Malone, both of whom have made it to the Finals but never won it all.

The Lakers struggled through the regular season last year and Kobe Bryant had to carry a bigger share of the load than ever. With Bryant recovering from off-season surgery as well as facing serious legal allegations, L.A. needs Shaquille O'Neal to come out on a mission from day one. That is not a bad prospect, considering that when healthy and focused, Shaq is almost unquestionably the league's most dominant player.

San Antonio Spurs: defending the rings

Though the Lakers dominated the media with their off-season ac-

quisitions of Gary Payton and Karl Malone, last year's champions, the Spurs, also improved their ranks. The team replaced retired Hall of Famer David Robinson with up-and-comer Rasha Nesterovic and added depth and experience to its bench with Robert Horry, Ron Mercer and Hedo Turkoglu.

Of course, most importantly, two-time reigning MVP Duncan is returning for his seventh season in San Antonio after ranking among the league's top seven players in scoring (23.3 points per game), rebounds (12.9 per game), field-goal percentage (.513) and blocks (2.93 per game) in 2002-03. If the young talent and new faces in his supporting cast can develop the chemistry and selfless play that was the hallmark of last year's team, the Spurs could very well finish atop the stacked competition in the West and make a return trip to the NBA Finals.

In 2002-03, guard Tony Parker's second year, he showed significant growth in running the San Antonio offense. At the same time, he became a more efficient scorer, upping his shooting percentages across the board, ranking second to Duncan in points (15.5 per game) and leading the team in assists (5.3 per game), capping his breakout season by leading his team to a championship.

Parker, however, was clearly dismayed when San Antonio openly pursued All-Star free agent Jason Kidd over the summer. Though Kidd ultimately re-signed with New Jersey, Parker may need to repair his relationship with the Spurs and coach Gregg Popovich as well as prove that he can join Duncan and function as a team leader.

Houston Rockets:

Yao Ming to lead offense

New coach Jeff Van Gundy is expected to tweak Houston's offense to run more through Yao Ming, much like his Patrick Ewing-focused teams in New York, while pushing team play over individual

glory. "We are going to be above all that to be a team," Van Gundy recently told the *Houston Chronicle*. "We are going to play team offense and team defense and gang rebound as a group, and we're going to win and lose as a group."

Yao is an excellent post passer and capable of getting the whole team involved on offense. How well his teammates step up is likely to prove the deciding factor in whether or not the Rockets are a competitor come playoff time.

One thing that will have to change is the play of star guard Steve Francis. He reacted to the arrival of 2002 No. 1 pick Yao Ming by taking more shots than in any of his previous three seasons, racking up a whopping 20 percent of the team's total.

Such selfish play is not likely to work under Van Gundy's system. One of the most well-rounded players in the league, Francis has to get into the groove of a team game and get all the Rockets involved if the team is to be a contender.

New Jersey Nets: to beat in the East

Signing Jason Kidd to a long-term deal has kept the Nets contenders for years to come and turned what could have been a dismal future into a very bright present. President Rod Thorn has done a great job surrounding Kidd with players that compliment his abilities, but he failed to address the need for another outside shooter during the off-season.

As long as the core of Kidd, Kenyon Martin and Richard Jefferson stay healthy, the Nets are favored to stay the team to beat in the East. Their center combination of Alonzo Mourning and Jason Collins is adequate for Eastern play, but one of those two will need to solidify the post for New Jersey to be able to take a title over a Western opponent.

Cleveland Cavaliers: great expectations

Every No.1 overall draft pick enters the NBA saddled by certain expectations. Historically, the majority has had at least some college experience before entering the league. LeBron James may be the first high school player to enter the league facing the same expectations as far more seasoned draft choices, not only for his considerable skills on the court but also for his influence off it.

He can score, he can handle the ball, he can run the floor and he can leap tall buildings in a single bound. Or so the Cavs hope. James' widely heralded skills led his high school games to be shown on cable in his native Ohio and on national TV in the US during his senior year.

He has already inked endorsement deals worth millions of dollars, sales of Cavaliers jerseys and season tickets have gone through the roof and the team, which failed to make a single appearance on American national television last season, is slated to do so 13 times in 2003-2004. Expectations for James are sky-high.

New Cavs coach Paul Silas says slow down there. Silas told the team's website that he was trying to temper the expectations, including speculation that James may take over at point guard. Silas said James, while immensely talented, will not be handling the point and instead will be put in the best position to help the team. While it may be too early to say as LeBron goes, so go the Cavs, it could be that way in a few years. The league, indeed the world, will be watching.

Europe Shocks, Dominates Women's Cup

By Zhang Bo

With a golden goal from substitute Nia Kuenzer, Germany came out victorious at the fourth FIFA Women's World Cup tournament with a 2-1 win over Sweden in Sunday's final. The victory made Germany the second European country to claim the top prize in women's soccer.

Before the tournament began, few thought that any teams outside the three traditional powers in women's soccer, China, Norway and the US, had a chance of winning. The underdog matching in the final, however, made it clear that a new order, dominated by the Europeans, has come into being in the international game.

China's "Steel Roses" wilt

In falling 0-1 to Canada in a quarterfinal match on October 2, the Chinese women came up short in their drive to win their first championship, to the surprise of fans domestic and foreign.

"I do not think the Chinese team has fallen to a second-class team internationally. Sun Wen, Bai Jie and all the players are equal matches for their German counterparts, but they did not bring their normal level of play," Michael Cai, a Malaysian FIFA official, told the Xinhua News Agency last Monday.

Many attributed the team's disappointing performance to the young players' failure to come to the fore when veteran plays lost their form. Midfielder Ren Liping told *Titan Sports* last Tuesday, "The main cause of our loss is that we did not succeed in taking advantage of our veterans."

Indeed, most of the team's rookies, such as Bi Yan, Liu Yali and Qu Feifei, showed subpar play and were completely eclipsed by Pu Wei and Zhang Ouying, who first emerged as stars in the 1999 World Cup. The Chinese women also showed an uncharacteristic



The German women celebrate their unexpected first World Cup on Sunday.

Xinhua Photos

flagging of aggressiveness. Some analysts have said that the new crop of talent in China has gone soft through more comfortable conditions and do not have the drive of their predecessors, who molded their careers in far tougher days.

The North Korean team was picked early on as the tournament's dark horse and came out running with a dominating 3-0 win over Nigeria in their first group match on September 20. Eight days later, however, they slowed their pace and were thumped 0-3 by the US, keeping them out of the quarterfinals.

US' vets not enough

Blanked 3-0 by Germany, the world's top-ranked team, the US, also failed to live up to their fans' expectations.

The American media responded to the loss with a shower of criticism, mostly targeted at the team's aging roster

and the head coach's conservative tactics.

"The age of [forward] Mia Hamm and [midfielder] Julie Foudy has come to an end, and it is high time women's soccer in the US inaugurated a new era," said an article in American newspaper *the New England Courant* last week.

Like their Chinese rivals, the US squad pinned its hopes on its veteran players, such as Hamm, Foudy and Kristine Lilly, who led the team to a world Championship four years ago.

The US women's success in the 1999 World Cup not only brought the women's game unprecedented attention in America, but also lured some big investors to what was shown to be an emerging sports market of significant potential.

The drive to tap that potential, however, seems to have lost steam. Following the American

women's victory in 1999, the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) was established in 2000 and quickly became the premier women's football league in the world. Unfortunately, its unstable operational mechanisms made it a questionable training ground for future US talent, and due to waning interest, the league folded just seven days before this year's World Cup.

Rise of Europe

While the losses suffered by the American and Chinese teams can be attributed to a failure to cultivate new talent, it is success in that area that made the European rise possible. Both German and Sweden, long powers in men's soccer, have been promoting the women's game in the past several years. They have used their solid foundation of proven training and good conditions to quickly bring their

women's teams to the forefront of world soccer.

In Sweden, increasing numbers of young women are participating in soccer and organized community matches are exploding. According to an article in the *Yangcheng Evening News* last week, around 1.15 million people, or 12 percent of the country's population, tuned their TVs to watch the Swedish women win a September 28 group match over Nigeria.

Chinese football authorities, including some top officials of the Chinese Football Association (CFA), seem to have realized the fundamental problems facing the development of the domestic team, especially those raised in comparisons with European squads.

"There is no denying that in this tournament, some traditional European soccer powers made great progress in the development of women's soccer. We should learn from their success, especially the building of a sound system for football development and management," Nan Yong, CFA vice president, told the website *tomsports.com* last Friday.



Sweden lost in the final match but had a very strong overall showing.

Hot Cuisine at Cool Spots

By James Liu

While it may not be at the international culinary cutting-edge, Beijing witnesses the opening of new restaurants nearly every day and sets its own food trends. A few local establishments opened in the past several months have quickly taken positions at the forefront of the local "cool" dining scene, offering popular foods in fun environments. A key to their success is preying upon the taste for spice back in popular palates with the return of cold weather.



Mala Youhuo features fiery food in a groovy atmosphere.

Photos by Lou Ge / Les Charlton



Richang Otto's Restaurant

The latest branch of the popular Guangdong-style Richang eateries opened on the Huayuan Lu restaurant street in Haidian District on August 8. Taking over a space formerly held by a Holiday Pizza joint, the new eatery offers far more room than its parent restaurant, an always-crowded firetrap in Dongdan.

In tried and true Richang style, items from the menu are hung on pieces of paper all over the walls and offered at the same prices in the new restaurant, despite its greater size and larger staff. It's a formula that is clearly working. "We were able to get into the black in only our second month of operation. Most restaurants



Cured meat with abalone sauce, 30 yuan

lose money for at least their first three months," said manager Zhang Limin.

Not surprising for its emphasis on Cantonese cooking, sweet is a common taste in Richang's dishes. For this winter, the restaurant is promoting a line of new Cantonese-style



Foil wrapped chicken wings, 28 yuan

hotpots, called *dabianlu*, that consist of iron pots containing slow-cooked chicken or spare ribs. Diners can then order accompanying portions of vegetables, thinly sliced lamb, beef or fish to turn the dishes into complete one-pot meals. The chicken *dabianlu* goes for 60 yuan and the spare ribs version for a

meager 18 yuan.

Vegetable offerings for hotpot dunking are a bit pricey, at around 8 yuan per plate, but the added expense is justified by the fact they are shipped up fresh from southern China. According to Zhang, one bite is all it takes to see the difference with the inferior local produce offered at most Beijing restaurants. English menu available.

Where: 8 Huayuan Donglu, Haidian **Open:** 10 am – 2 am **Tel:** 8203 8155 **Average cost:** 33 yuan per person



Mala Youhuo

This hot and spicy eatery has already wormed its way into the hearts, minds and stomach of the city's fashionable youth. Officially opened on April 8, the two-storey restaurant has since drawn steady streams of heat lovers with its two house specials, braised fish in hot oil (*shuizhuyu*) and fried spicy snails (*mala tianluo*), offered in a pleasant, sun-soaked environment.

The décor is appealing, with dark red tables and chairs on a black stone floor that features occasional brass tiles engraved with Chinese poetry. "Our aim was to make this place a top choice for people under 30 and anyone who loves spicy good. During most mealtimes, it's so noisy that people have to shout at each other to talk, which lots of people think is fun," Chen Yunhua, the restaurant's marketing manager, told *Beijing Today*.

House special *shuizhuyu* is sold either by set or by weight. Diners can choose from carp (*caoyu*), sold at 45 yuan per set or 64 yuan per kilogram, catfish (*nianyu*),



Fried spicy snails, from 22 yuan



Braised fish in hot oil, from 45 yuan

which fetches 48 yuan per set or 76 yuan per kilogram, or the luxurious snakehead fish (*heiyu*), sold only by weight at 110 yuan per kilogram. The fiery fried spicy snails fetch 22 yuan for a regular portion or 38 yuan for the deluxe offering.

The menu does not have English, but is filled with pictures of most of the dishes. More remarkably, the menu has a background from the *Book of Changes*, or *Yi Jing*, which the manager said is intended to ward off evil and bring luck to the restaurant and its customers. A more tangible gesture to please diners is the offering of 30 yuan lunch coupons to all parties that spend 100 yuan or more.

Where: 81 Guangnei Dajie, Caishikou, Xuanwu **Open:** 11 am – 10:30 pm **Tel:** 6304 0426 **Average cost:** 45 yuan per person



Boat Quay Restaurant

By Helen Zhou

Boat Quay Restaurant, opened in August, can make a solid argument for being the most authentic Singaporean eatery in Beijing, as its owners and chefs all hail from the small nation. Aside from the Singaporean options, however, the restaurant also offers diners a chance to try gastronomic treats from around the globe, including Italian, Mexican and Indian dishes.

The eclectic menu is one of the main secrets behind the

restaurant's success despite only having been in operation for around three months. Recommended items include curried fish head with pineapple slices and vegetables (*gali yutou*, 45 yuan), Cantonese-style braised duck with sauce cooked in herbs (*Chaozhou luya*, 28 yuan), coffee pork chops (*kafei zhupa*, 36 yuan), and sambal fish head (sambal yutou, 38 yuan). The latter is a Singapore delicacy, a tender fish head cooked in a rich homemade curry paste along with chunks of taro and slices of green chili and pineapple.



Coffee pork chops, 36 yuan

Also on offer is a wide range of beverage and desert selections that go for around 20 yuan or so each.

Where: 12B Xinzhong Jie, 128 Ziming Plaza, Dongcheng **Open:** 11:30 am – 2:30 pm, 5:30-11 pm **Tel:** 6417 9683 **Average cost:** 50 yuan or so per person



Oishii Means Delicious Nouveau Japanese

By Les Charlton

The attraction of most local Japanese restaurants is as much their traditional décor as what issues out from their kitchens. Now, the popular image of kimono-clad waitresses, *tatami* mats and sliding paper partitions has been turned on its head with the opening of the Oishii Fusion Japanese Restaurant, the capital's first upscale dining venue of its kind, in Pacific Century Plaza in the Sanlitun area.

The only physical resemblances this new upscale eatery shares with its more classically styled counterparts are a sushi bar, glistening a la carte *teppanyaki* and cartoon-style

rendering of Mount Fuji and other spots in Japan and Beijing. The spacious restaurant has a large main dining area along with several private rooms, all featuring what owner Rita Chow calls "neutral Western" design.

Oishii, pronounced *o-ish-ee*, is the Japanese word for delicious – an apt description for the high-quality cuisine. Local food critics and gourmets have been quick to praise the scope of the seemingly endless and innovative offerings on the menu, as well as the reasonable prices.

The *teppanyaki* bar has proven especially popular, not least because of the utensil-juggling entertainment provided by four chefs. However, it's their mastery of the preparation of fish, meats and vegetables on the hotplate and roasting grills that keeps the diners coming back.



Desert as a work of art

Other highlights of the massive menu include many variations on sushi and sashimi, superb caviar, succulent oysters flown in fresh from France, Japanese paper hot pot. Alaskan king crab, Kobe beef, no less than 50 choices of *bento* boxes and, representing the restaurant's fusion side, roast Peking duck and great steaks.

Where: Unit 202, Level 2, Pacific Century Shopping Mall 2A Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang **Open:** 11 am – 10 pm **Tel:** 6539 3555, 6539 3556 **Average cost:** 80 yuan per person



A sampling of Oishii's offerings

Comforting Curried Soup

By Joel Kirkhart

The unusual mixture of ingredients in this filling soup result in a savory, slightly sweet dish enhanced by a curry kick. Plus, its creamy depths are perfect for warming up a body just in from the cold. Delicious served hot or cold.

Ingredients

- 1 large potato (1/4 kilo), peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 celery heart (inner pale stalks with leaves), coarsely chopped (1/2 cup)
- 1 large apple (preferably Granny Smith), peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 firm-ripe banana, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 liter chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 rounded teaspoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives

Procedure

Simmer vegetables and fruits in broth in a large heavy saucepan, covered, until very tender, about 12 minutes. Stir in the cream, butter, curry powder, and salt and heat just until hot – do not boil.

Purée soup in a blender until smooth, and use caution, as the soup will be very hot. Thin the soup with water or hot broth if desired. Sprinkle chopped chives over soup before serving.

Like many soups, time is on the side of this dish, allowing its diverse flavors to more completely meld together. The soup can be made up to two days ahead and is best around one day after cooking.

Makes four to six servings.



Movies

**Traveling Companion
(Compagna di Viaggio)**

Cora is a poor homeless girl who is hired to care for Cosimo, the Alzheimer-stricken father of the woman whose dog she walks. Cosimo's pride won't allow Cora to help him, forcing Cora to secretly follow him when he leaves the house. One day, Cosimo boards a train and Cora is forced to follow him to an unknown destination. In Italian with Chinese subtitles.

Where: Cultural Office of the Italian Embassy **When:** October 17, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187



Lectures

Architecture of Rural China

Lou Qingxi, a professor at Tsinghua University, will give a talk accompanied by slides to introduce rural China in diverse geographic locations. Lou is the author of "Rural Architecture in China" and student of the late pioneer architect Liang Sicheng. English narration provided.

Where: Lee's Carpet House, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu **When:** October 18, 2:30-4:30 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan for adults, 30 yuan for students. **Tel:** 8462 2081

Fun Chinese Learning

The Apex Language School's Chinese teacher will deliver a lecture on how to learn Chinese in an easy way.

Where: 30th floor, A Tower, Soho **When:** October 30, 7-8:30 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6567 8888

Sports

2003 Beijing International Marathon

Both professional and amateur runners are expected to take part in the annual event, one of the top ten marathons in the world. The runners will include world women's 10,000 meters bronze medallist Sun Yingjie. The race will pass through Xicheng, Haidian and Chaoyang districts and end up at the Olympic Sports Centre.

Where: Chang'an Avenue **When:** October 19, 8:30 am **Admission:** 30 yuan for Chinese, US\$60 for foreigners **Tel:** 6527 6865 (local residents), 6301 4868 (other provinces), 6461 2527 (foreigners).

Stage

**Modern Dance: Bone**

A collaboration between the Canadian Snell Thouin Project and the Beijing Modern Dance Company, using dramatic lighting, film sequences and music to explore the theme of searching for love. Featuring choreography by Nadine Thouin, and music – a fusion of alternative rock from Montreal and rock/traditional music from Beijing – by Jerry Snell, who will perform the music live with three other musicians.

Where: Ethnic Cultural Palace Theatre **When:** October 17-18, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-280 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888

Jams

John Digweed

Consistently voted in the top 10 DJ's in the world by magazines such as DJ and Muzik, British DJ-producer John Digweed's talents are in demand worldwide, from Australia, Hong Kong and Russia to South America.

Where: North gate of Worker's Stadium **When:** October 18, **Admission:** **Tel:** 6530 2889

Squeeze 18

Last month The Club hosted the talents of Squeeze 18's DJ Danny Wheeler and MC Wrec, and liked what they heard. The duo is back again after a quick Japanese tour to bring you more true drum & bass.

Where: the Club, Beisanlitun Nanli **When:** October 18, 10 pm **Admission:** 100 yuan **Tel:** 6417 7791

Latin Lust

A night of pure Latin American fun. DJ Andres from Colombia gives you merengue, salsa, vallenato and cumbia, and professional dancer Lucho Roa will show you how the booty is supposed to move.

Where: Vibes, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Dashanzi **When:** October 18, 10 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6437 8082

Music

Metal Music

October 17, the band Overloading will perform. On October 18, Xie Tianxiao and Cold-blooded Animal will appear.

Where: Get Lucky Bar, 500 meters east of University of International Business and Economics (Jingmao Daxue) south gate **When:** 9:30 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan, 30 yuan for students **Tel:** 6420 4249

Activities

Hands-on: hand-stretching noodles and garnishes

In a lovely traditional courtyard style hotel, watch how one of the best chefs from Shanxi province pulls a piece of dough into noodles in a few minutes! Then get ready to create your own feast and experiment with your own hands. After that, you will learn to carve garnishes of roses out of turnips and cucumbers. English narration provided.

Where: Bamboo Garden Hotel, Jiu Gulou Dajie **When:** October 19, 2:30-4:30 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan (30 yuan for students/kids) **Tel:** 6403 2229

Exhibition

Yu Xiaodong Oil Painting Exhibition

Yu spent many years researching religion and culture in Tibet, visiting temples and living with the local villagers. His works feature bright and rich heavy colors, conveying the stunning natural beauty of Tibet and its culture.

Where: Huaweili 1-1E, north of Beijing Curio City **When:** October 17 – November 17, 9:30 – 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0458

Wang Baoming's Solo Exhibition

Wang Baoming was born in Hebei in 1969 and started painting about thirteen years ago. On display will be 30 of his woodcut works including Big Eyes and the Great Wall series.

Where: Fa Fa Gallery **When:** till October 31, 9 am – 10 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8430 2587

Eyes to Tibet

About 50 works featuring scenes of Tibet including oil paintings and photos.

Where: Today Art Gallery **When:** October 18-28, 9 am – 5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6221 7711 ext. 452

Xiao Se Solo Oil-painting Exhibition

A professional Beijing painter, Xiao Se's works have been shown in Berlin, Bonn, and Hong Kong. He employs bold colors to depict the intricacy of social relations in a humorous way.

Where: Wan Fung Art Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** October 18 – 28 **Admission:** Free **Tel:** 6523 3320



Giving Venus a Warm Welcome by Xiao Se

The Sixth Beijing International Music Festival

**Grand Opening of the Sixth Beijing Music Festival**

Featuring music by Bizet, Gershwin and Ravel. Performers include Lu Qiming and John Corigliano, and the programs include *Ode to the Red Flag* and *Rhapsody in Blue*.

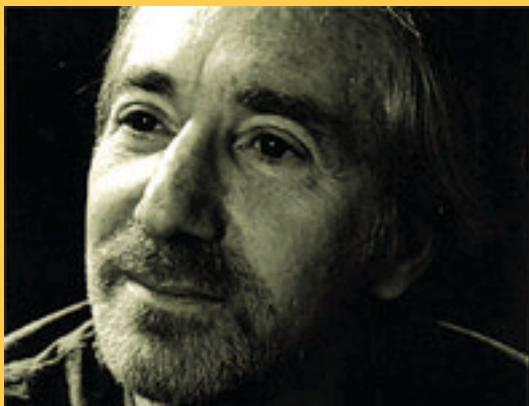
Violin: Lara St. John
Piano: Denis Matusev
Orchestra: China Philharmonic Orchestra

Conductor: Klaus Weise
Where: Poly Theatre **When:** October 17, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 80-800 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888

Recital by Li Xiangting

Featuring works of Qin & Xiao

Where: Dongyuan Theater
When: October 22, 7:30 pm
Admission: 380, 680 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888

**Chamber Music Recital by the Celebrated Violinist Gidon Kremer**

Recital by celebrated violinist Gidon Kremer, featuring music by Bach including Symphony in D Minor, arranged for violin and piano by Ernest Alder (piano, Andrius Zlaby).

Where: Poly Theatre **When:** October 23, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-680 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888

Chinese Modern Opera

Performed by China Philharmonic Orchestra. The programs include *The Night Banquet (Ye Yan)* and *Wolf Cub Village*. Starring Gong Dongjian, Fan Jinma, Wu Bixia, Jiang Qihu and Wang Haitao. Conducted by Yang Yang.

Where: Poly Theatre **When:** October 19-20, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 60-380 yuan **Tel:** 6406 8888



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Old Beijing lives

A look at a map shows Gulou Xidajie is unusual, as it does not follow the grid pattern of the Old City. Instead it runs diagonal from north west to south east. There is a simple reason for this. It is parallel to the lakes of Shishahai. These formed part of a waterway system bringing supplies to the city along the Grand Canal. Commercial activities naturally developed in the area, although not directly along the eastern shore of the lakes, because of the proximity of residences of members of the royal family.

The street is tree-lined, narrow and congested. Planners would dearly love to improve it, so easing the traffic flow. However, there is a problem — historic buildings create constrictions that cannot be widened. This traffic problem is one reason why upmarket housing is unlikely to develop along the road, in contrast to the much sought-after developments a few minutes away at peaceful Houhai.

Gulou Xidajie is Old Beijing. Outside homes cabbages are piled up alongside round coal blocks. Indeed, so small are some of the homes that cooking is sometimes done outdoors. Small shops sell music cassettes and CDs and tiny restaurants display menus proclaiming their cheap prices.

The architectural mix quickly becomes apparent. Surviving *siheyuans* (courtyard houses) with gray painted walls and roofs covered with gray curved tiles often have extensions built onto the street. Adjoining may be quality restaurants constructed in a style different to the original local design. Inside diners may casually gaze out on old men in blue jackets playing chess, a man selling plants from the back of a bicycle cart, a monk in brown robes walking to the local temple and a woman pushing a bamboo pram loaded with fruit.

Modern buses carrying adverts for a 21st century lifestyle pass women hanging out quilts and blankets on brick platforms beside their minute homes. Although small, many houses have little gardens with large potted plants. Some still have colorful New Year papers around their faded wooden doors. Some of these doors, heavy wood structures with intricate designs, suggest the status of the original inhabitants. The larger the door, the more recessed it is and the greater the size of the *mendun*, small stone pillars either side of the door, the higher the rank of the official.

Although many shops are at the lower end of commercial activity, again there are contrasts. Expensive motorcycles are on sale and at No. 160 is a fine store selling traditional Chinese musical instruments such as *erhu*, *guzheng* and *yangqin*.

A high solid brick wall with a gray tiled top and little stone figurines protected a former palace from an alley leading down to Houhai Lake. Wanderers can discover a small courtyard house being restored with fine wooden frames going around its doors and windows. Yet, next door another house had the character for demolition, *chai* (拆), painted on its walls. This peaceful area around the lake is much sought after for expensive housing built in traditional style — a world away from the main street!

The north side of the street continues as a mixture of housing and shops. One enterprising family has a notice — “Welcome to my Home” — inside is a small gallery selling paintings.

The south side changes totally and instead of a variety of *siheyuans* it is lined with formal gray walls protecting official buildings, offices of the International Social Science Journal of UNESCO, the former residence of Madame Soong Ching-ling and eventually the many tiled roofs of Guanghua Temple.

On the opposite side, long red walls topped with green tiles protects a magnificent temple dedicated to Guan Yu, a military general of the Three Kingdoms (220-260 BC) and Yue Fei (1103-1142), the patriot general of Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). The entire complex, including the Qomolangma Hotel, is home to the offices of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Beijing.

The contrasts reappear. Supermarkets sit next door to house front kiosks. Bicycles line the pavements as people on the fringe of the booming economy live by selling cigarettes, drinks, flowers or running small tailor shops. Others selling car tires, computers and business equipment are very much part of the new society.

Fine modern offices appear. Some are converted courtyard houses while others have been recently built in traditional style sympathetic with the local area.

A number of environmental improvements have been undertaken. Walls have been repainted and grass lawns laid. Older residents sit there and must wonder sometimes at the changes they have seen.

Along an adjoining alley of tiny courtyards waiting demolition several blocks of fine apartments are under construction. It was a delight to see the incorporation of traditional design and color in their construction.

Eventually the sheer red walls and green tiled roofs of the Drum and Bell towers rise above the scene. Here at the north end of the North-South axis, tourism briefly takes over and recent improvements to the local infrastructure emphasize the historical importance of the towers.



By Bruce Connolly / James Liu

Beijing is a complex city of historical and modern areas. The latter are planned and illustrate conformity in design and function. Many older areas have often lost their original identity and frequently show a pattern of unplanned changes, making them fascinating areas to explore and study.

The future of these twilight or transition zones is often debated. A factor controlling the development of some

is the presence of important historical buildings.

An area illustrating the contrasts and the dilemma of inner city development is around Gulou — the famous Drum and Bell tower district and former home to many top officials of the Imperial Court.

A very interesting walk starts from Deshengmen Gate on the North Second Ring Road (Beierhuan Lu). It follows Gulou Xidajie and Gulou Dongdajie to Jiadaokou, where the old Beijing suddenly gives way to the new.

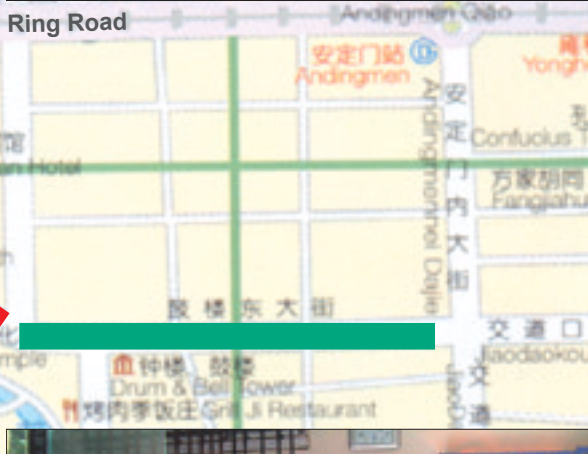
Deshengmen, built in 1440, was a gate in the wall that once surrounded the Inner City. It controlled one of the routes leading up to Badaling Pass of the Great Wall. Gulou Xidajie led from the gate to the city's eight-kilometer long North-South axis, which passes through the center of the Forbidden City, Tian'anmen Square and south through Qianmen (Front Gate). North of Deshengmen rises the skyline of modern Beijing that is quite a contrast to the landscape of Gulou.



Contemporary and business atmosphere on Gulou Dongdajie



Old houses on Gulou Xidajie
Photos by Bruce Connolly James Liu



Mixture of past and modern

This also marks the start of Gulou Dongdajie going east from its congested intersection with Dianmenwai Dajie. The pleasant tree-lined street illustrates some significant differences to its western cousin.

There are still the low-rise buildings and the hotchpotch mixture of functions such as food outlets and kiosks selling cheap clothes and shoes. Restaurants are plentiful, particularly outlets for roast duck and Xinjiang-style food. However, it is the small shops selling computer games that dominate the street. The number of outlets seems to have recently mushroomed, reflecting the popularity of such pursuits among the city's youth. Similarly, shops selling skate boards and sports clothes have started to appear — going after the same young and often lucrative market.

Musical shops selling drums and guitars for budding rock musicians are opening. The street is much more entertainment orientated. Even a fine old gray-tiled house is being converted into a bar, the first on the street. Everywhere youngsters seem to be furiously discussing the latest trend in electronic entertainment and music or looking through the clothes on sale in smart boutiques. Smart photo studios now sit beside the ubiquitous one-hour photo developing booths.

A middle school opens out onto the street. Although hundreds of children in identical blue, red and white tracksuits cycle home, a growing number of parents are collecting their children by car. Is this the start of the 'school-run' that is a western traffic nightmare!

There are also similarities with Gulou Xidajie — many hair salons, small restaurants and fine arched entrances into overcrowded, multiple-occupancy courtyards. Older people are carried past in bicycle carts, which are often quicker than buses in this traffic-filled thoroughfare.

Coming towards Jiadaokou the contrasts continue. A house with a sloping tiled roof is literally one room wide — a small door and window frame occupy the front. Then a large gateway leads into what was once an imposing courtyard of a high official. Next door an Internet cafe is booming. Then there are flower boutiques and more designer fashion outlets, all occupying former low-rise buildings that once were homes.

Suddenly the old world stops and we are back to New Beijing. Ahead are medium-rise apartments where last year still existed the old world today found along Gulou's busy street. Shops sell mobile phones, computers, and air-conditioners, all the features of the modern world. There are also queues of traffic at the intersection, and there is light, plenty of light because the previous two-lane road has been replaced by a six-lane boulevard. The fascination of the old world has also gone, replaced with efficiency and conformity to design, but that is the price of progress.